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Desert Dust*

A ROMANCE OF THE BUILDING OF THE GREAT AMERICAN WEST

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IN the estimate of the affable brakeman—a gentleman wearing sky-blue army pantaloons tucked into cowhide boots, half-buttoned vest, flannel shirt open at the throat, and upon his red hair a flaring-brimmed black slouch hat—we were making a fair average of twenty miles an hour across the greatest country on earth. It was a flat country of far horizons, and for vast stretches peopled mainly, as one might judge from the car windows, by herds of antelope and communities of the curious rodents styled prairie-dogs.

Yet, despite the novelty of such a ride into that new West, then being spanned at giant's strides by the miraculous transcontinental railroad, behold me, already surfeited with five days' steady travel, chiefly engrossed in observing a clear, dainty profile and waiting for glimpses, from time to time, of a pair of exquisite blue eyes.

Merely to indulge myself in feminine

beauty, however, I need not have undertaken the expense and fatigue of journeying from Albany, on the Hudson, out to Omaha, on the plains side of the Missouri River; thence by the Union Pacific line into the Indian country. There were handsome women a plenty in the East—of access, also, to a youth of family and parts; and I had pictures of the same in my social register. A man does not attain to twenty-five years without having accomplished a few pages of the heart book.

Nevertheless, all such pages were—or had seemed to be—wholly retrospective now, for here I was, advised by the physicians to "go West"; and this did not mean the readily accessible West of Ohio, or Illinois, or even Iowa, but the remote and genuine West lying beyond the Missouri. Whereupon, out of desperation that flung the gauntlet down to hope, I had taken the bull by the horns in earnest. West should

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be full dose, at the utmost procurable by modern conveyance.

The Union Pacific announcements proclaimed that in this summer of 1868 the rails would reach the Rocky Mountains, in Utah; and that by the end of the year one might ride comfortably clear to Salt Lake City. Certainly this was "going West" with a vengeance; but as it appeared to me—and to my father and mother and the physicians—somewhere in the expanse of brand-new Western country, the plains and mountains, I would find at least the breath of life.

When I arrived in Omaha, the ticket agent was enabled to sell me transportation as far as the town of Benton, in Wyoming Territory, six hundred and ninety miles, he said, west of the Missouri.

Of Benton I had never heard. It was as yet upon no public maps; but in round figures it was seven hundred miles beyond Omaha—practically the distance from Albany to Cincinnati, and itself distant from Albany more than two thousand miles, all by rail!

Benton was, he explained, the present end of passenger service, this August. In another month—and he laughed.

"Fact is, while you're standing here," he told me, "I may get orders any moment to sell a longer ticket. The Casements are laying two to three miles of track a day, seven days in the week, and stepping right on the heels of the graders. Last April we were selling only to Cheyenne, rising of five hundred miles. Then in May we began to sell to Laramie, five hundred and seventy-six miles. Last of July we began selling to Benton, a hundred and twenty miles farther. Track's now probably fifty or more miles west of Benton, and there's liable to be another passenger terminus tomorrow; so it might pay you to wait."

"No," I said. "Thank you, but I'll try Benton. I can go on from there as I may think best. Could you recommend any local accommodations?"

He stared through the bars of the little window, behind which lay a six-chambered revolver.

"Could I do what, sir?"

"Recommend a hotel at Benton, where I'm going. There is a hotel, I suppose?"

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed testily. "In a city of three thousand people? A hotel? A dozen of 'em, but I don't know their names. What do you expect to find

in Benton? You're from the East, I take it. Going out on spec, or pleasure, or health?"

"I have been advised to try Western air for a change," I answered. "I am looking for some place that is high and dry."

"Consumption, eh?" he shrewdly remarked. "High and dry—that's it! Oh, yes, you'll find Benton high enough, and toler'ly dry, you bet! And nobody dies natural at Benton, they say. Here's your ticket—thank you—and the change. Next, please!"

It did not take me long to gather the change remaining from seventy dollars in greenbacks swapped for six hundred and ninety miles of travel at ten cents a mile. I hastily stepped aside. A subtle fragrance and a rustle warned me that I was obstructing a representative of the fair sex. So did the ticket agent's smirk and smile.

"Your pardon, madam," I proffered, lifting my hat, and agreeably dazzled while thus performing.

She acknowledged the tribute with a faint blush. While pocketing my change and stowing away my ticket, I had opportunity to survey her farther.

"Benton," she said briefly to the agent.

We were bound for the same point, then! Ye gods, but she was a little beauty—a perfect blonde, of the petite and fully formed type, with regular features inclined to the clean-cut Grecian, a piquant mouth deliciously bowed, two eyes of the deepest blue veiled by long lashes, and a mass of glinting golden hair upon which perched a ravishing little bonnet. The natural ensemble was enhanced by her costume, all of black, from the closely fitting bodice to the rustling crinoline beneath which there peeped out tiny shoes. I had opportunity, also, to note the jet pendant in the shelly ear toward me, and the flashing rings upon the fingers of her hands, which were ungloved just now in order to sort out the money from her reticule.

Sooth to say, I might not stand there gawking. Once, by a demure sidewise glance, she betrayed knowledge of my presence. Her own transaction was all matter-of-fact, as if engaging passage to Benton, in Wyoming Territory, contained no novelty for her. Could she by any chance live there—a woman dressed as she was, as much *à la mode* as if she walked Broadway in New York?

Omaha itself had astonished me with the

display upon its streets; and now if Benton, far out in the wilderness, should prove another surprise! Indeed, the Western world was not so raw, after all. Strange to say, as soon as one crossed the Missouri River one began to sense romance, and to discover it.

As it seemed to me, the ticket agent would have detained her, in defiance of the waiting line; but she finished her business shortly, with shorter replies to his idle remarks. I turned away under pretense of examining some placards upon the wall advertising "Platte valley lands" for sale. I had curiosity to see which way she wended.

As she tripped for the door, casting eyes neither right nor left, and still fumbling at her reticule, a coin slipped from her fingers and rolled, by good fortune, across the floor. I was after it instantly; caught it, and with best bow presented it.

"Permit me, madam!"

She took it.

"Thank you, sir."

For a moment she paused, to restore it to its company; and I ventured to grasp the occasion.

"I beg your pardon. You are going to Benton, in Wyoming Territory?"

Her eyes met mine so completely as well-nigh to daze me with their glory. There was a quizzical uplift in her frank, arch smile.

"I am, sir—to Benton City, in Wyoming Territory."

"You are acquainted there?" I ventured.

"Yes, sir, I am acquainted there. And you are from Benton?"

"Oh, no," I assured. "I am from New York State." As if anybody might not have known! "But I have just purchased my ticket to Benton, and," I stammered, "I have made bold to wonder if you would not have the goodness to tell me something of the place—as to accommodations, and so forth. You don't by any chance happen to live there, do you?"

"And why not, sir, may I ask?" she challenged.

I floundered before her query direct, and before her bewildering eyes and lips—all tantalizing.

"I didn't know—I had no idea—Wyoming Territory has been mentioned in the newspapers as largely Indian country—"

"At Benton we are only six days behind New York fashions," she smiled. "You have not been out over the railroad, then,

I suspect—not to North Platte? Nor to Cheyenne?"

"I have never been west of Cincinnati before."

"You have surely been reading of the great new railroad that is to link the East with California?"

"Yes, indeed. In fact, a friend of mine, named Stephen Clark, nephew of the Hon. Thurlow Weed, formerly of Albany, was killed a year ago by your Indians while surveying west of the Black Hills. And of course there have been accounts in the New York papers."

"You are not on survey service?"

"No, madam."

"A pleasure trip to end of track?"

She evidently was curious, but I was getting accustomed to questions into private matters. That was the universal license, out here.

"The pleasure of finding health," I laughed. "I have been advised to seek a location high and dry."

"Oh!" She dimpled adorably. "You will make no mistake, then, in trying Benton. I can promise you that it is high and reasonably dry. And as for accommodations—so far as I have ever heard, anybody can be accommodated there with whatever he may wish."

She darted a glance at me, and stepped aside as if to leave.

"I am to understand that it is a city?" I pleaded.

"Benton? Why, certainly! All the world is flowing to Benton. We gained three thousand people in two weeks—much to the sorrow of poor old Cheyenne and Laramie. No doubt there are five thousand people there now, and all busy. Yes, a young man will find his opportunities in Benton. I think your choice will please you. Money is plentiful, and so are the chances to spend it." She bestowed upon me another sparkling glance. "And since we are both going to Benton, I will say *au revoir*, sir!"

She left me quivering.

"You do live there?" I had time to ask, and I received a nod of the golden head as she entered the sacred ladies' waiting-room.

Until the train should be made up I could only stroll, restless and strangely buoyed, with that vision of an entrancing fellow traveler filling my eyes. Summoned in due time by the shout of "Passengers for the Pacific Railway! All aboard, going

west on the Union Pacific!" amid the platform hurly-burly of men, women, children, and bundles I had the satisfaction to sight the black-clad figure of my lady of the blue eyes; hastening, like the rest, but not unattended—for a brakeman bore her valise and the conductor her parasol. The scurrying crowd gallantly parted before her. It was promptly closed upon her wake; try as I might, I was utterly unable to keep in her course.

Obviously, the train was to be well occupied. Carried on willy-nilly, I mounted the first steps at hand and elbowed on down the aisle until I managed to squirm aside into a vacant seat. The remaining half was at once effectually filled by a large, stout, red-faced woman who formed the base of a pyramid of boxes and parcels.

My neighbor, who blocked all egress, was going to North Platte, three hundred miles westward, I speedily found out. She almost as speedily learned that I was going to Benton.

She stared, round-eyed.

"I reckon you're a gambler, young man," she accused.

"No, madam, I am not. Do I look like a gambler?"

"You can't tell by looks, young man," she asserted, still suspicious. "Maybe you're on spec, then, in some other way?"

"I am seeking health in the West—that is all—where the climate is high and dry."

"My Gawd!" she blurted. "High and dry! You're goin' to the right place! For all I hear tell, Benton is high enough and dry enough. Are your eye-teeth peeled, young man?"

"My eye-teeth?" I repeated. "I hope so, madam. Are eye-teeth necessary in Benton?"

"Peeled, and with hair on 'em, young man," she assured. "I guess you're a pilgrim, ain't you? I see a leetle green in your eye. No, you ain't a tin-horn. You're some mother's boy, jest gettin' away from the nest. My sakes! Sick, too, eh? Weak lungs, ain't it? Now you tell me—why you goin' to Benton?"

There was an inviting kindness in her query. Plainly she had a good heart, large in proportion with her other bulk.

"It's the farthest point west that I can reach by railroad, and everybody I have talked with has recommended it as high and dry."

"So it is," she nodded; and chuckled

fatly. "But laws sakes, you don't need to go that fur. You can as well stop off at North Platte, or Sidney, or Cheyenne. They'll sculp you sure at Benton, unless you watch out mighty sharp!"

"How so, may I ask?"

"You're certainly green," she appraised. "Benton's roarin'—and I know what that means. Didn't North Platte roar? I seen it at its beginnin's. My old man and me, we were there from the fust, when it started in as the railroad terminus. My sakes, but them were times! What with the gamblin' and the shootin' and the drinkin' and the high-cockalorums night and day, 'twasn't no place for innocence. Easy come, easy go, that was the word. I don't say but what times were good, though. My old man contracted government freight, and I run an eatin'-house for the railroaders, so we made money. Then, when the railroad moved terminus, the wust of the crowd moved, too, and us others who stayed turned North Platte into a strictly moral town. But land sakes, North Platte in its roarin' days wasn't no place for a young man like you! Neither was Julesburg, nor Sidney, nor Cheyenne, when they was terminuses; and I hear tell Benton is wuss'n all rolled into one. Young man, now listen—you stop off at North Platte, Nebraska. It's healthy and it's moral, and it's goin' to make Omyhaw look like a shinplaster. I'll watch after you. Maybe I can get you a job in my old man's store. You've jined some church, I reckon? Now if you're a Baptist—"

But since I had crossed the Missouri something had entered into my blood which rendered me obstinate against such allurements. For her North Platte, so "strictly moral," and for the guardianship of her broad motherly wing, I had no special fancy. I was set upon Benton; foolishly, fatuously set, no doubt.

"But I have already purchased my ticket to Benton," I objected. "I understand that I shall find the proper climate there, and suitable accommodations. If I don't like it, I can move elsewhere—possibly to Salt Lake City, or Denver."

She snorted.

"In among them Mormons? My Gawd, young man! I guess your mother wouldn't care to have you go to Salt Lake! Denver—well, Denver mightn't be bad, though I do hear tell that folks nigh starve to death there, what with the Injuns and the snow.

Denver ain't on no railroad, either. If you want health, and to grow up with a strictly moral community, you throw in with North Platte, Nebraska, the great and growin' city of the plains. I reckon you've heard of North Platte, even where you come from. You take my word for it, and exchange your ticket!"

It struck me here that the good woman might not be unbiased in her fondness for North Platte. To extol the present and future of these Western towns seemed a fixed habit. During my brief stay in Omaha—yes, on the way across Illinois and Iowa from Chicago—I had encountered this characteristic trait. Iowa was rife with aspiring if embryonic metropolises. In Nebraska I heard that Columbus was destined to be the new national capital and the center of population for the United States; Fremont was lauded as one of the great railroad junctions of the world; and North Platte, three hundred miles out into the plains, was proclaimed as the rival of Omaha, and "strictly moral."

"I thank you," I replied; "but since I've started for Benton, I think I'll go on. If I don't like it, or it doesn't agree with me, you may see me in North Platte after all."

She grunted.

"You can find me at the Bon Ton Restaurant. If you get in broke, I'll take care of you."

With that, she settled herself comfortably, and in remarkably short order she was asleep and snoring.

II

THE train started amid clangor of bell and shouts of good-by and good luck from the crowd upon the station platform. We rolled out through train yards occupied to the fullest by car-shops, round-house, piled-up freight depot, stacks of ties and iron, and tracks covered with freight-cars loaded high with rails, ties, baled hay, and all manner of supplies designed, I imagined, for the building operations far to the west.

Soon we had left this busy railroad town behind, and were entering the open country. The landscape was pleasing, but the real sights probably lay ahead; so I turned from my window to examine my traveling quarters.

The coach—a new one, built in the company's shops, and decidedly upon a par with the very best coaches of the Eastern

roads—was jammed; every seat was taken. I did not see my lady of the blue eyes, nor her equal, but almost the whole gamut of society was represented. There were farmers, merchants, and a few soldiers; plainsmen in boots, flannel shirt-sleeves, long hair, and large hats, with revolvers hanging from the racks above them or from the seat-ends; one or two white-faced gentry in broadcloth and patent-leather shoes—who I fancied might be gamblers, such as now and then plied their trade upon the Hudson River boats; two Indians in blankets; Eastern tourists, akin to myself; women and children of country type; and so forth.

I specially noticed the carbines racked against the ends of the coach—for protection in case of Indians or highwaymen, no doubt. I observed bottles being passed from hand to hand, and tilted *en route*. It was astonishing to see how frequently and how copiously whisky was consumed in this country.

My friend from North Platte snored peacefully. Near noon we halted for dinner at the town of Fremont, some fifty miles out. She awakened at the general stir, and when I squeezed by her she immediately fished for a packet of lunch. We had thirty minutes at Fremont—ample time in which to discuss a very excellent meal of antelope steaks, prairie fowl, fried potatoes, and hot biscuits. There was promise of buffalo meat farther on—possibly at the next meal station, Grand Island.

The time was sufficient, also, to give me another glimpse of my lady of the blue eyes, who appeared to have been awarded the place of honor at table, between the conductor and the brakeman. She bestowed upon me a subtle glance of recognition, with a smile and a slight bow in one; but I failed to find her upon the station platform after the meal. That I should have other opportunities I did not doubt. It was still thirty hours' travel to Benton.

All that afternoon we rocked along up the Platte Valley, with the Platte River, a broad but shallow stream, constantly upon our left. My seat companion had evidently exhausted her repertoire, for she slumbered at ease, gradually sinking into a shapeless mass, her flowered bonnet askew. Several other passengers also were sleeping—owing, in part, to the passing of the whisky-bottles. The car was thinning out, I noted, and I might bid in advance for the

chance of obtaining a new location in a certain car ahead.

The scenery through the car window had merged into a monotony accentuated by great spaces. As far as Fremont the country along the railroad had been well settled, with farms and unfenced but cultivated fields. Now we had issued into the untrammelled prairies, here and there humanized by an isolated shack, or by a lonely traveler by horse or wagon, but in the main a vast, sun-baked sea of gentle, silent undulations extending, brownish, clear to the horizon.

The only refreshing sights were the Platte River, flowing blue and yellow among sand-bars and islands, and the side streams that we passed. Close at hand the principal tokens of life were the little flag stations, and the tremendous freight-trains side-tracked to give us the right of way. The widely separated hamlets where we impatiently stopped were the oases in the desert.

In the sunset we halted at the supper station, named Grand Island. My seat neighbor finished her lunch-box, and I returned well fortified by another excellent meal at the not exorbitant price of one dollar and a quarter. I had tasted buffalo meat—a poor apology, to my notion, for good beef. Antelope steak, on the contrary, was of far finer flavor than the best mutton.

At Grand Island a number of Indians drew my attention, for the time being, from quest of my lady of the blue eyes. However, she was still escorted by the conductor, who began to irritate me, with his brass buttons and his officious air. Such a persistent squire of dames rather overstepped the duties of his position. Confound the fellow! He surely would come to the end of his run and his rope before we went much farther.

"Now, young man, if you get shet of your foolishness and decide to try North Platte instead of some fly-by-night town on west," my seat companion addressed, "you jest follow me when I leave. We get to North Platte after plumb dark, and you hang on to my skirts right up-town, till I land you in a good place. If you don't, you're liable to be skinned alive!"

"If I decide upon North Platte, I will certainly take advantage of your kindness," I evaded. Forsooth, she had a mind to kidnap me!

"Now you're talkin' sensible," she ap-

proved. "My sakes alive! Benton!" She sniffed. "Why, in Benton they'll snatch you baldheaded 'fore you've been there an hour!" She composed herself for another nap. "If that pesky brakeman don't remember to wake me, you give me a poke with your elbow. I wouldn't be carried beyond North Platte for love or money!"

She gurgled, she snored. The sunset was fading from pink to gold—a gold like somebody's hair; and from gold to a pale lemon hue which tinted all the prairie and made it beautiful. Pursuing the sunset, we steadily rumbled westward through the immensity of unbroken space.

The brakeman came in, lighting the coal-oil lamps. Outside, the twilight had deepened into dusk. Numerous passengers were making ready for bed—the men by removing their boots, coats, and suspenders, and stretching out; the women by loosening their stays, with significant clicks and sighs, and laying their heads upon adjacent shoulders or drooping against seat-ends. Babies cried, and were hushed. Final night-caps were taken, from the prevalent bottles.

The brakeman, returning, paused and inquired right and left on his way through. He leaned to me.

"You for North Platte?"

"No, sir—Benton, Wyoming Territory."

"Then you'd better move up to the car ahead. This car stops at North Platte."

"What time do we reach North Platte?"

"Two thirty in the morning. If you don't want to be waked up, you'd better change now. You'll find a seat."

At that I gladly followed him out. He indicated a half-empty seat.

"This gentleman gets off a bit farther on; then you'll have the seat to yourself."

The arrangement was satisfactory, albeit the "gentleman" with whom I shared appeared, to nose and eyes, rather well soused, as they say; but fortune had favored me, for across the aisle, only a couple of seats beyond, I glimpsed the top of a golden head, securely low and barricaded in by luggage.

Without regrets I abandoned my former seat-mate to her disappointment when she waked at North Platte. This car was the place for me, set apart by the salient presence of one person among all the others. That, however, is enough to differentiate city from city, and even land from land.

Eventually I slept—at first by fits and

starts, then more soundly, when the "gentleman" beside me had been hauled out and deposited elsewhere. I fully awakened only at daylight.

The train was rumbling on as before. The lamps had been extinguished, but the atmosphere of the coach was heavy with oil smell and the exhalations of human beings in all stages of dishabille. The golden head was still there, about as when last sighted.

Now it stirred, and was lifted a little. I felt the unseemliness of sitting and waiting for her to make her toilet, so I hastily staggered to achieve my own by aid of the water-tank, tin basin, roller towel, and small looking-glass at the rear—substituting my personal comb and brush for the pair hanging there by cords.

The coach was the last in the train. I stepped out upon the platform for a breath of fresh air.

We were traversing the real plains of the Great American Desert, I judged. The prairie grasses had shortened to brown stubble, interspersed with bare sandy soil rising here and there into low hills. It was a country without north, south, east, west, save as denoted by the sun, broadly launching his first beams of the day.

Behind us the single track of rails stretched straight away, as if clear to the Missouri. The dull blare of the car-wheels were the only tokens of life, excepting the long-eared rabbits scampering with erratic jumps, and the prairie-dogs sitting bolt upright in the sunshine among their hillocked burrows. Of any town there was no sign. We had cut loose from human company.

Then we thundered by a freight-train, loaded with still more ties and iron, standing upon a siding guarded by the idling trainmen and by an operator's shack. Smoke was welling from the chimney of the shack—and that domestic touch gave me a sense of homesickness. Yet I would not have been at home, even for breakfast. This wide realm of nowhere fascinated me with the lure of the unknown.

The train and shack flattened into the landscape. A bevy of antelope flashed white tails at us as they scudded away. Two motionless figures, on horseback, whom I took to be wild Indians, surveyed us from a distant sand-hill. Across the river there appeared what looked like a fungus growth of low buildings, almost indistinguishable, with a glimmer of canvas-

topped wagons fringing it. That was the old emigrant road.

While I was thus orienting myself in lonesome but not entirely hopeless fashion, the car door opened and closed. I turned my head. The lady of the blue eyes had joined me, looking as fresh as the morning.

"Oh! You? I beg your pardon, sir."

She apologized, but I felt that the diffidence was more politic than sincere.

"You are heartily welcome, madam," I assured. "There is air enough for us both."

"The car is suffocating," she said. "However, the worst is over now. We shall not have to spend such another night. You are still for Benton?"

"By all means." I bowed to her. "We are fellow travelers to the end, I believe."

"Yes?" She scanned me. "But I do not like that word—the end. It is not a popular word, in the West; certainly not at Benton. For instance—"

We tore by another freight waiting upon a siding located amid a debris of tin cans, scattered sheet-iron, stark chimneys of mud and stone, and barren posts, resembling a town ruined by fire and earthquake.

"There is Julesburg."

"A settlement?" I gasped.

"The end." She smiled. "The only inhabitants now are in the station-house and the graveyard."

"And the others—where are they?"

"Farther west. Many of them are in Benton."

"Indeed? Or perhaps in North Platte!" I bantered.

"North Platte!" She laughed merrily. "Dear me, don't mention North Platte—not in the same breath with Benton, or even Cheyenne. A town of hayseeds and dollar-a-day clerks whose height of sport is to go fishing in the Platte! A young man like you would die of ennui in North Platte. Julesburg was a good town while it lasted. People *lived* there. They moved on because they wished to keep alive. What is life, anyway, but a constant shuffle of the cards? Oh, I should have laughed to see you in North Platte!" And laugh she did. "You might as well be dead underground as buried in one of those smug seven-Sabbaths-a-week places."

Her free speech accorded ill with what I had been accustomed to in womankind; and yet it became her sparkling eyes and general dash.

"To be dead is past the joking, madam," I reminded.

"Certainly—to be dead is the end. In Benton we live while we live, and don't mention the end. So I took exception to your gallantry." She glanced behind her through the door window into the car. "Will you," she asked hastily, "join me in a little appetizer, as they say? You will find it a superior cognac—and we break-fast shortly, at Sidney."

From a pocket of her skirt she had extracted a small silver flask, stopped with a tiny screw cup. Her face swam before me, in my astonishment.

"I rarely drink liquor, madam," I stammered awkwardly.

"Nor I; but when traveling—you know. And in high and dry Benton a little liquor is quite a necessity. You will discover that, I am sure. You will not decline to taste with a lady? Let us drink to better acquaintance, in Benton!"

"With all my heart, madam," I could not help responding.

She poured, while swaying to the motion of the train; passed the cup to me with a brightly challenging smile.

"Ladies first—that is the custom, is it not?" I queried.

"But I am hostess, sir. I do the honors. Pray do your duty!"

"To our better acquaintance, then, madam," I accepted. "In Benton."

The cognac swept down my throat like a stab of hot oil. She poured for herself.

"*A votre santé, monsieur*—and continued beginnings, no ends!" She daintily tossed it off.

We had consummated our pledges just in time. The brakeman issued, stumping noisily and bringing discord into my heaven of blue and gold and comfortable warmth.

"Howdy, lady and gent? Breakfast in twenty minutes." He grinned affably at her—yes, with a trace of familiarity. "Sleep well, madam?"

"Passably, thank you." Her voice held a certain element of calm interrogation, as if to ask how far he intended to push acquaintance. "We're nearing Sidney, you say? Then I bid you gentlemen good morning."

With a darting glance at him and a parting smile for me, she passed inside. The brakeman leaned for an instant's look ahead, up the track, and lingered.

"Friend of yours, is she?"

"I met her at Omaha—that's all," I stiffly informed.

"Considerable of a dame, eh?" He eyed me. "You're booked for Benton, too?"

"Yes, sir."

"Never been there, myself. She's another hell-roarer, they say."

"Sir!" I remonstrated.

"Oh, the town, I mean," he enlightened. "I'm saying nothing against it, for that matter—nor against her, either. They're both O. K."

"You are acquainted with the lady yourself?"

"Her? Sure! I know about everybody along the line between Platte and Cheyenne. Been running on this division ever since it opened."

"She lives in Benton, though, I understand," I proffered.

"Why, yes—sure she does. Moved there from Cheyenne." He looked at me queerly. "Naturally. Ain't that so?"

"Probably it is," I admitted. "I see no reason to doubt your word."

"Yep. Followed her man. A heap of people moved from Cheyenne to Benton, by way of Laramie."

"She is married, then?"

"Far as I know. Anyway, she's not single, by a long shot." He laughed. "But, Lord, that cuts no great figure! People here don't stand on ceremony in those matters. Everything's aboveboard. Hands on the table until time to draw—then draw quick!"

The brakeman's language was a little too bluff for me.

"Her husband is in business, no doubt?"

"Business?" He stared unblinking. "I see!" He laid a finger alongside his nose, and winked wisely. "You bet yuh! And good business—yes, siree! Are you on?"

"Am I on?" I repeated. "On what—the train?"

"I'll be damned!" he roundly vouchsafed, and I laughed. "You've been having a quiet little smile with her, eh?" He sniffed suspiciously. "A few swigs of that 'll make a pioneer of you quicker 'n alkali. She's favoring you, eh? Now if she tells you of a system, take my advice and quit while your hair's long!"

"My hair is my own fashion, sir," I rebuked; "and the lady is not for discussion between gentlemen, particularly as my acquaintance with her is only casual. I don't understand your remarks, but if they are

insinuations I shall have to ask you to drop the subject."

"Tut, tut!" he grinned. "No offense intended, Mr. Pilgrim. Well, you're all right. We can't be young more than once, and if the lady takes you in tow in Benton, you'll have the world by the tail as long as it holds. She moves with the top-notchers; she's a knowing little piece—no offense! Her and me are good enough friends. There's no brace game in that deal. I only aim to give you a steer—savvy?" He winked. "You're out to see the elephant yourself!"

"I am seeking health—that's all," I explained. "My physician advised a place in the Far West, high and dry; and Benton is recommended."

His response was practically identical with others preceding.

"High and dry? By golly, then Benton's the ticket. It's sure high, and sure dry. You bet yuh! High and dry and roaring!"

"Why roaring?" I demanded. The word had been puzzling me.

"Up and coming. Pop goes the weasel, at Benton. Benton? Lord love you! They say it's got Cheyenne and Laramie backed up a tree, the best days they ever seen. When you step off at Benton, step lively and keep an eye in the back of your head. There's money to be made at Benton, by the wise ones. Watch out for ropers, and if you get on to a system, play it. There ain't any limit to money or suckers."

"I may not qualify as to money," I informed; "but I trust that I am no sucker."

"No green in the eye, eh?" he approved. "Anyhow, you have a good lead, if your friend in black cottons to you." Again he winked. "You're not a bad-looking young feller." He leaned over the side steps, and gazed ahead. "Sidney in sight! Be there directly. We're hitting twenty miles and better through the greatest country on earth. The engineer smells breakfast!"

III

With that, he went forward. So did I; but the barricade at the end of my lady's seat was intact, and I sat down in my own place, to keep an expectant eye upon her profile—a decided relief amidst that crude ensemble of people in various stages of hasty dressing after a night of discomfort.

The brakeman's words, although mysterious in part, had concluded reassuringly.

My lady, he said, would prove a valuable friend in Benton. A friend at hand means a great deal to any young man, a stranger in a strange land.

The conductor came back—a new conductor—stooped familiarly over the barricade, and evidently exchanged pleasantries with her.

"Sidney! Sidney! Twenty minutes for breakfast!" the brakeman bawled from the door.

There was a general stir among the passengers. My lady shot a glance at me with inviting eyes, but arose in response to the proffered arm of the conductor, and I was too late. The aisle filled between us as he ushered her on, and the train slowed to grinding of brakes and the tremendous clanging of a gong.

Of Sidney there was little to see—merely a station-house and the small Railroad Hotel, with a handful of other buildings forming a single street, all squatting here near a rock quarry that broke the expanse of uninhabited brown plains. The air, however, was wonderfully invigorating, and the meal excellent, as usual.

When I emerged from the dining-room, following closely a black figure crowned with gold, I found her strolling alone upon the platform. I caught up with her. She faced me with ready smile.

"You are rather slow in action, sir," she lightly accused. "We might have breakfasted together; but it was the conductor again, after all."

"I plead guilty, madam," I admitted. "The trainmen have an advantage over me in anticipating events; but the next meal shall be my privilege. We stop again before reaching Benton?"

"For dinner, yes—at Cheyenne."

"And after that you will be at home."

"Home?" she queried, with a little pucker between her brows.

"Yes—at Benton."

"Of course!" She laughed shortly. "Benton is now home. We have moved so frequently that I have grown to call almost no place home."

"I judge, then, that you are connected, as may happen, with a flexible business," I hazarded. "If you are in the army, I can understand."

"No, I'm not an army woman; but there is money in following the railroad, and that is our present life," she said frankly. "A town springs up, you know, at each termi-

nus, booms as long as the freight and passengers pile up—and all of a sudden the go-ahead business and professional men pull stakes for the next terminus. That has been the custom, all the way from North Platte to Benton."

"Which accounts for your acquaintance along the line. The trainmen seem to know you."

"Trainmen and others—oh, yes, it is to be expected. I have no objection to that. I am quite able to take care of myself, sir."

We were interrupted. A near-drunken rowdy, upon whom I had kept an uneasy corner of an eye, had been careening over the platform, a whisky-bottle protruding from the hip pocket of his sagging jeans, a large revolver dangling at his thigh, his slouch hat cocked rakishly upon his tousled head. His language was extremely offensive; he had an ugly mood on, but nobody interfered. The crowd stood aside—the natives laughing, the tourists like myself viewing him askance, and several Indians watching gravely.

He sighted us, and staggered in.

"Howdy?" he uttered, with an oath.

"Hello, stranger, have a smile! Take two—one for lady. Hic!"

He thrust his bottle at me. My lady drew back, and I civilly declined the "smile."

"Thank you, I do not drink."

"What?" He stared blearily. His tone stiffened. "The hell you say! Too tony, eh? Too—hic! Have a smile, I ask you, one gent to 'nother. Have a smile, you durned pilgrim! If you don't—"

"Train's starting, Jim," she interposed sharply. "If you want to get aboard, you'd better hurry."

The engine tooted, the bell was ringing, the passengers were hurrying, incited by the conductor's shout:

"All aboard!"

Without another word she tripped for the car steps. I gave the fellow one look as he stood stupidly scratching his thatch, as if to harrow his ideas, and made in the same direction. The wheels moved as I planted foot upon the steps of the nearest car—the foremost of the two. The train continued; halted again abruptly, while cheers rang riotous; and when I crossed the passageway between this car and ours, the conductor and the brakeman were hauling the tipsy Jim into safety. The

ruffian had jumped for the steps at the last moment, and had almost fallen under the wheels.

My lady was already ensconced.

"Did they get him?" she inquired, when I paused.

"By the scruff of the neck. The drunken fellow, you mean?"

"Yes—Jim."

"You know him?"

"He's from Benton. I suppose he's been down here on a little *pasear*, as they say."

"If you think he'll annoy you—" I made bold to suggest, for I greatly coveted the other half of her seat.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of Jim. But yes, do sit down. You can put these things back in your seat. Then we can talk."

I had no more than settled triumphantly, when the brakeman ambled through, his face in a broad grin. He also paused to perch upon the seat end, his arm extended along the back in friendly style.

"Well, we got him corralled," he proclaimed needlessly. "That t'rantula juice nigh broke his neck for him!"

"Did you take his bottle away, Jerry?" she asked.

"Sure thing! He'll be peaceable directly. Soused to the guards! Reckon he's inclined to be a trifle ugly when he's on a tear, ain't he? They'd shipped him out of Benton on a down train; now he's going back up."

"He's safe, you think?"

"Sewed tight! He'll sleep it off and be ready for night." The brakeman winked at her. "You needn't fear. He'll be on deck, right side up with care."

"I've told this gentleman that I'm not afraid," she answered quickly.

"Of course! And Jim knows what's best for himself." The brakeman slapped me on the shoulder and good-naturedly straightened. "So does this young gentleman, I rather suspicion. I can see his fortune's made, if he works it right. I told him if you cottoned to him—"

"Now you're talking too much, Jerry," she reproved. "The gentleman and I are only traveling acquaintances."

"Yes, ma'am—to Benton. Let 'er roar! Cheyenne's the closest I can get, myself, and Cheyenne's a dead one—blowed up, busted worse'n a galvanized Yank with a pocket full o' Confed wall-paper." He yawned. "Guess I'll take forty winks."

Was up all night, and a man can stand jest so much, Injuns or no Injuns."

"Did you expect to meet with Indians, sir, along the route?" I asked.

"Always expect to meet 'em between Kearney and Julesburg. It's about time they were wrecking another train. Well, so-long! Be good to each other!"

With this parting piece of impertinence he stumped out.

"A friendly individual, evidently," I hazarded, to tide her over her possible embarrassment.

Her laugh assured me that she was not embarrassed at all—which proved her good sense and elevated her even further in my esteem.

"Oh, Jerry's all right. I don't mind him, except that his tongue is hung in the middle. He has probably been telling you some tall yarns?"

"He? No, I don't think so. He may have tried to, but his Western expressions are beyond me as yet. In fact, what he was driving at on the rear platform I haven't the slightest idea."

"Driving at? In what way, sir?"

"He referred to a mysterious 'system,' and gratuitously offered to give me a 'steer.'"

Her face hardened remarkably, so that her chin set as if tautened by iron hands. Those eyes glinted with real menace.

"He did, did he? The clapper-jaw! He's altogether too free." She surveyed me keenly. "And naturally you couldn't understand such lingo."

"I was not curious enough to try, my dear madam. He talked rather at random; probably enjoyed bantering me. But," I hastily placated in his behalf, "he recommended Benton as a lively place, and you as a friend of value in case you honored me with your patronage."

"My patronage, for you?" she exclaimed. "Indeed! To what extent, pray? Are you going into business, too? As one of—us?"

"If I should become a Bentonite, as I hope," I gallantly replied, "then of course I should look to permanent investment of some nature; and before my traveling funds run out I shall be glad of light employment. The brakeman gave me to understand merely that by your kindly interest you might be disposed to assist me."

"Oh!" Her face lightened. "I dare say Jerry means well; but when you spoke

of 'patronage'—that is a current term of certain import along the railroad." She leaned to me; a glow emanated from her. "Tell me of yourself. You have red blood? Do you ever game? For if you are not afraid to test your luck and back it, there is money to be made very easily at Benton, and in a genteel way." She smiled bewitchingly. "Or are you a Quaker, to whom life is deadly serious?"

"No Quaker, madam." How could I respond otherwise to that pair of dancing blue eyes, to that pair of derisive lips? "As for gaming—if you mean cards, why, I have played at piquet and romp, in a social way, for small stakes; and my father brought Old Sledge back from the army to the family table."

"You are lucky. I can see it," she said.

"I am, on this journey," I asserted.

She blushed.

"Well said, sir! And if you choose to make use of your luck, in Benton, by all means—"

Whether she would have shaped her import clearly I did not know. There was a commotion in the forward part of the car. That same drunken wretch whom she called Jim had reappeared; his bottle—somehow restored to him—in hand, his hat pushed back from his flushed, greasy forehead.

"Have a smile, ladies and gents!" he was bellowing thickly. "Hooray! Have a smile on me. Great an' gloryus 'casion—hic! Ever'body smile. Drink to op'nin' glorious Pacific—hic—Railway. Thash it. Hooray!"

Thus he came reeling down the aisle, thrusting out his bottle right and left, to be denied with shrinkings or with bluff excuses.

It seemed inevitable that he would reach us. I heard my lady utter a little gasp, as she sat more erect; and here he was, espying us readily enough with that uncanny precision of a drunken man, his bottle to the fore.

"Have a smile, you two! Wouldn't smile at station; gotto smile now. 'Rah for Benton! All goin' to Benton. Lesh be good fellers!"

"You go back to your seat, Jim," she ordered tensely. "Go back, if you know what's good for you!"

"Whash that? Who your dog last year? Shay, you can't come no highty-tighty over me. Who your new friend? Shay!" He reeled and gripped the seat, flooding me

with his vile breath. "By Gawd, I got the dead wood on you, you—"

He had loosed a torrent of low epithets.

"For that I'd kill you in any other place, Jim," she said. "You know I'm not afraid of you. Now get, you wolf!"

Her voice snapped like a whip-lash, at the close; she had made sudden movement of hand—it was extended, and I saw almost under my nose the smallest pistol imaginable, nicked, of two barrels, and not above three inches long. It projected from her palm, the twin hammers cocked; and it was as steady as a die.

Assuredly my lady did know how to take care of herself! Still, that was not necessary now.

"No!" I warned. "No matter—I'll attend to him!"

The fellow's face had convulsed with a snarl of rage; his mouth opened as if for fresh abuse. Half rising, I landed upon it with my fist.

"Go where you belong, you drunken whelp!"

I had struck and spoken at the same time, with a rush of wrath that surprised me. The result surprised me still more, for, while I was not conscious of having exerted much force, he toppled backward clear across the aisle and crashed down in a heap under the opposite seat. His bottle shattered against the ceiling, and the whisky spattered in an odorous shower over the alarmed passengers.

"Look out! Look out!" she cried, starting quickly.

Up he scrambled, cursing, and wrenching at his revolver. I sprang to grapple with him, but there was a wild flurry, and men leaped between us with a chorus of shouts. The brakeman and conductor both had arrived, and in a jiffy the ruffian was being hustled forward, swearing and blubbing. I sank back, breathless, a degree ashamed, a degree satisfied with my action and my barked knuckles.

Congratulations echoed dully.

"The right spirit!"

"That 'll l'arn him to insult a lady!"

"You sartinly rattled him up, stranger—suar' on the twitter!"

"Shake, mister!"

"For a pilgrim, you're consider'ble of a boss!"

"If he'd drawn, you'd have give him a pill, I reckon, lady. I know yore kind. But he won't bother you agin—not he!"

To all this I paid scant attention. My lady sat composedly, scarcely breathing hard. The little pistol had disappeared.

"The play has been made, ladies and gentlemen," she said. And to me: "Thank you! Yes," she continued, with a flash of lucent eyes and a dimpling smile, "Jim has lost his whisky, and now he has a chance to sober up. He'll have forgotten all about this before we reach Benton; but I thank you for your promptness."

"I didn't want you to shoot him," I stammered. "I was quite able to attend to him myself. Your pistol is loaded?"

"To be sure it is!" She laughed gaily, but her lips tightened, her eyes darkened. "I'd kill him like a dog if he presumed further. In this country we women protect ourselves from insult. I always carry my derringer, sir!"

The brakeman returned with a broom, to sweep up the debris of the broken bottle. He grinned at us.

"There's no wind left in him now," he communicated. "Just as peaceful as a baby. We took his gun off him. I'll pass the word ahead to keep him safe, on from Cheyenne."

"Please do, Jerry," she requested. "I'd prefer to have no more trouble with him, for he might not come out so easily next time. He knows that."

"Surely ought to, by golly," the brakeman agreed roundly. "And he ought to know you go heeled; but that there tangle-foot went to his head. Looks now as if he'd been kicked in the face by a mule. Haw, haw! No offense, friend. You got me plumb buffaloed with that five-spot o' yours;" and, finishing his job, he retired with dust-pan and broom.

"You're going to do well in Benton," she said suddenly, to me, with a nod. "I regret this scene, though of course I couldn't help it. When Jim's sober he has sense, and never tries to be too familiar."

She was amazingly cool under the epithets that he had applied. I admired her for that as she gazed at me pleadingly. "A drunken man is not responsible for his words or actions, although he should be made so," I consoled her. "Possibly I should not have struck him. In the Far West you may be more accustomed to these episodes than we are in the East."

"I don't know. There is a limit. You did right, and I thank you heartily. Still"—and she mused—"you can't always de-

pend on your fists alone. You carry no weapon—neither knife nor gun?"

"I never have needed either," said I. "My teaching has been that a man should be able to rely upon his fists."

"Then you'd better get 'heeled,' as we say, when you reach Benton. Fists are a short-range weapon. The men generally wear a gun somewhere. It is the custom."

"And the women, too, if I may judge," I smiled.

"Some of us. Yes," she repeated, "you're likely to do well out here, if you'll permit me to advise you a little."

"Under your tutelage I am sure I shall do well," I agreed. "I may call upon you in Benton? If you will favor me with your address—"

"My address?" She searched my face with what seemed to be a startled look. "You'll have no difficulty finding me; but I'll make an appointment with you"—and she smiled archly—"if you are not afraid of strange women!"

"I have been taught to respect women, madam," said I; "and my respect is being strengthened."

"Oh!" I seemed to have pleased her. "I see that you have been carefully brought up, sir."

"To fear God, respect woman, and act the man as long as I breathe," I asserted. "My mother is a saint, my father a nobleman, and what is good in me I have learned from them."

"That may go excellently in the East," she answered; "but we in the West favor the Persian maxim—to ride, to shoot, and to tell the truth. With those three qualities even a tenderfoot can establish himself."

"Whether I can ride and shoot sufficient for the purpose, time will show," I retorted. "At least"—I endeavored to speak with proper emphasis—"you hear the truth when I say that I anticipate much pleasure as well as renewed health in Benton."

"Were we by ourselves, we should seal the future by taking another 'smile' together—if that would not shock you," she slyly suggested.

"I am ready to fall in with the customs of the country," I assured her. "I certainly am not averse to smiles, when fittingly proffered."

So we exchanged fancies while the train rolled on across the vast, empty plains, which were bare save for the low shrubs called sage-brush, and which rose here and

there into long swells and abrupt sandstone pinnacles.

We stopped near noon at the town of Cheyenne, in Wyoming Territory. Cheyenne—which, I was told, once boasted the title of the Magic City of the Plains—was located upon a dreary flatness, although from it one might see, far to the southwest, the actual Rocky Mountains in Colorado Territory, looking, at this distance of one hundred miles, like low, dark clouds. The up-grade in the west promised that we should cross over their northern flanks.

Last winter I was given to understand Cheyenne had ten thousand inhabitants; but the majority had followed the railroad westward, so that now there remained only some fifteen hundred. After dinner we, too, went west.

We overcame the first range of foot-hills about two o'clock, having climbed to the top with considerable puffing of the engine, but otherwise almost imperceptibly to the passengers. When we were halted, upon the crown, at Sherman Station, to permit us to alight and see for ourselves, I could scarcely believe that we were more than eight thousand feet in the air. There was nothing to indicate such an elevation, except some little difficulty of breath—not so much as I had feared when in Cheyenne, whose six thousand feet gave me a slightly giddy sensation.

My lady moved freely, being accustomed to the rarity of the air; and she assured me that, although Benton was at a height of seven thousand feet, I would soon grow wonted to the atmosphere. The habitués of this country made light of the altitude we had reached. The strangers on tour picked flowers and gathered rocks as mementoes of the "crest of the continent"—which was not a crest but rather a level plateau, wind-swept and chilly, while sunny. Then, from this summit at Sherman, the train swept down by its own momentum from gravity.

The fellow Jim had not emerged as yet, much to my relief. The scenery was increasing in grandeur and interest, and the presence of my charming companion would have transformed the most prosaic of journeys into a trip through Paradise.

We reached a town named Laramie City, where our car was invaded by vendors hawking what they termed "mountain gems" through the train. Laramie, according to my lady, had also once been,

as she styled it, a "live town," but had deceased in favor of Benton. From Laramie we whirled northward through a broad valley enlivened by countless antelope scouring over the grasses. Thence, turning to the west again, we issued into a wilder, rougher country, skirting mountains very gloomy in aspect.

However, of the panorama outside I took but casual glances; the phenomenon of blue and gold so close at hand was all-engrossing, and my heart beat high with youth and romance. Our passage seemed astonishingly short, but the sun was near to setting beyond distant peaks when she knew by the landmarks that we were approaching Benton at last.

We crossed a river—the Platte, again, even away in here; briefly paused at a military post, and entered upon a stretch of unbaked, reddish-white, dusty desert utterly devoid of vegetation.

There was a significant bustle among the travel-worn occupants of our car. The air was choking with the dust swirled through every crevice by the stir of the wheels. Dust clouds arose, too, from the teams that we passed, of six and eight horses tugging heavy wagons. Plainly we were within striking distance of some focus of human energies.

"Benton! Benton in five minutes! End o' track!" the brakeman shouted.

"My valise, please," I heard my lady say.

I brought it. The conductor—who, like the other officials, knew my lady—pushed through to us and laid hand upon it.

"I'll see you out," he announced. "Come ahead!"

"Pardon—that shall be my privilege," I interposed; but she quickly denied.

"No, please! The conductor is an old friend. I shall need no other help—I'm perfectly at home. You can look out for yourself."

"But shall I see you again—and where? I don't know your address, or even your name," I pleaded desperately.

"How stupid of me!" She spoke fast and low, over her shoulder. "To-night, then, at the Big Tent. Remember!"

I pressed after her.

"The Big Tent! Shall I inquire there? And for whom?"

"You'll not fail" to see me. Everybody knows the Big Tent—everybody goes there. *So au revoir!*"

She was swallowed in the wake of the conductor, and I fain must gather my own belongings before following. The Big Tent, she said! I had not misunderstood; and I puzzled over the address, which struck me as rather bizarre, whether in West or East.

We stopped with a jerk, amid a babel of cries.

"Benton! All out!"

Out we stumbled. Here I was, at rainbow's end!

IV

WHAT shall I say of a young man like myself, fresh from the green East of New York and the Hudson River, landed expectant, as just aroused from a dream of rare beauty, at this Benton City, Wyoming Territory?

The dust, as fine as powder and as white as wheat flour, but shot through with the crimson of sunset, hung like a fog through which swelled a deafening clamor from figures rushing hither and thither about the platform like shades from the lower world. A score of voices dinned into my ears as two-score hands grabbed at my valise and shoved me and dragged me.

"The Desert Hotel, best in the West! This way, sir!"

"Buffalo Hump Corral! The Buffalo Hump! Free drinks at the Buffalo Hump!"

"Vamose, all o' you! Leave the gent to me. I've had him before. Mike's Place for you, eh? Come along!"

"The Widow's Café! That's yore grub-pile, gent! All you can eat for two bits!"

Then a deep voice boomed, almost stunning me.

"The Queen, the Queen! Bath for every room. Individual towels. The Queen, the Queen! She's clean, she's clean!"

It was a magnificent bass, full-toned as an organ, issuing, as out of a reed, from a swart dwarf scarcely higher than my waist. The word "bath," with the promise of "individual towels," won me over. Something must be done, anyway, to get rid of these importunate runners.

"All right, my man—to the Queen," I acquiesced.

Surrendering my bag to his hairy paw, I trudged by his guidance. The solicitations of the others instantly ceased, as if in agreement with some code.

We left the station platform and went plowing up a street over shoe-tops with the impalpable dust, and marked out by tents and white-coated shacks sparsely bordering it. The air was breezeless and suffocatingly loaded with more dust not yet deposited. The noises swelled strident, as from a great city—shouts, hammerings, laughter, rumble of vehicles, cracking of lashes, barkings of dogs innumerable. The bustle betokened a thriving mart of industry; but although pedestrians streamed to and fro, the men in a motley of complexions and costumes, the women, some of them fashionably dressed, with skirts eddying furiously; and wagons rolled, horses cantered, and from right and left merchants and hawkers seemed to be calling their wares, of the city itself I could see only the veriest husk.

Most of the buildings were mere canvas, faced up for a few feet, perhaps, with sheet iron or flimsy boards. Interspersed there were a few wooden structures, rough and unpainted. Whereas several of the housings were large, none was of more than two stories. When now and again I thought that I had glimpsed a substantial stone front, a closer inspection told me that the stones were imitation, forming a veneer of the sheet iron or of stenciled pine. Indeed, not a few of the upper stories, viewed from an unfavorable angle, proved to be only thin parapets upstanding for a pretentious appearance. Behind them, nothing at all!

In the confusion of what I took to be the main street, because of the stores and piles of goods and the medley of signs, what with the hubbub from the many barkers for saloons and gambling games, and the constant dodging among the pedestrians, vehicles, horses, and dogs, in a thoroughfare that was innocent of sidewalk, I really had scant opportunity to gaze about—certainly no opportunity, as yet, to get my bearings.

Presently my squat guide shuttled aside; a group of loafers opened passage, with sundry stares at me and quips for him; and I was ushered into a widely open tent-building, whose canvas sign, depending above a narrow veranda, proclaimed it as the Queen Hotel, with the additional information that it offered beds for three dollars and meals for one dollar.

Now as whitely powdered as any of the natives, I passed across a single large room bordered at one side by a bar and a num-

ber of small tables, all well patronized, and brought up at the counter. Here I found myself under the alert eyes of a clerk, who, coatless, silk-shirted, diamond-scarfed, pomaded, and slick-haired, was waiting with register turned and pen extended.

My gnome heavily dropped my bag.

"Gent for you," he presented.

"I wish a room and bath," I said as I signed.

"Bath is occupied. I'll put you down, Mr.—" He glanced at the signature. "Four dollars and four bits, please. Show the gentleman to No. 6, Shorty. That drummer's gone, isn't he?"

"You bet!"

"The bath is occupied?" I expostulated. "How so? I wish a private bath."

"Private? Yes, sir. All you've got to do is to close the door while you're in. Nobody'll disturb you. But there are parties ahead of you. First come, first served, you know."

I persisted.

"Your runner—this gentleman, if I am not mistaken"—I indicated the gnome, who grinned from his dusty face—"distinctly told me that you had a bath for every room."

Bystanders had pushed nearer, to examine the register and then me. They laughed and nudged one another. Evidently I had a trace of green in my eye.

"Quite right, sir," the clerk assented. "So there is—a bath for every room, and the best bath in town. Entirely private; fresh towel supplied. Only one dollar and four bits. That, with lodging, makes four dollars and a half. If you please, sir!"

"In advance?" I remonstrated—the bath charge alone being monstrous.

"I see you're from the East. Yes, sir; we have to charge transients in advance. That is the rule, sir. You stay in Benton City for some time?"

"I am undetermined."

"Of course, sir. Your own affair; but we shall hope to make Benton pleasant for you. The greatest city in the West, sir! Anything you want for pleasure or business you'll find right here."

"The greatest city in the West—pleasure or business!"

A bitter wave of homesickness welled into my throat, as, conscious of the enveloping dust, the false pretenses of the raw and tawdry town, the alien and unsympathetic onlookers, the suave but in-

cisive manner of the clerk, the sense of having been "done" through my own fault, I peeled a greenback from the folded packet in my purse and handed it over. Rather foolishly, I intended that this display of funds should rebuke the finicky clerk; but he accepted my twenty-dollar bill without comment and sought for change.

"And how is old New York, suh?"

A hearty, florid, heavy-faced man, with protruding fishy eyes and a tobacco-stained yellowish goatee underneath a loosely dropping lower lip, had stepped forward, his pudgy hand hospitably outstretched to me. He wore a wide-brimmed black hat, a frayed and dusty broadcloth frock coat spattered down the lapels, an exceedingly soiled collar, a greasy flowing tie, and trousers tucked into cowhide boots.

I grasped the hand wonderingly. It enclosed mine with a soft, pulpy squeeze, and lingered.

"As usual, when I last saw it, sir," I responded; "but I am from Albany."

"Of course—Albany, the capital, a city to be proud of, suh! I welcome you, suh, to our new West, as a fellow citizen!"

"You are from Albany?" I exclaimed; for his accent did not at all smack of the banks of the Hudson.

"Bohn and raised right near there; been there many a time. Yes, suh—from the grand old Empire State, like yourself, suh, and without apologies. Whenever I meet with a New York State man, I cotton to him."

"Have I your name, sir?" I inquired. "You know of my family, perhaps?"

"Colonel Jacob B. Sunderson, suh, at your service. Your family name is familiar to me, suh. I hark back to it and to the grand old State with pleasure. Doubtless I have seen you befoh, suh. Doubtless in New York City—at Delmonico's—yes?" His fishy eyes beamed upon me, and his breath smelled strongly of liquor. "Meanwhile, suh, permit me to do the honors. First, will you have a drink? This way, suh! I am partial to a brand particularly to be recommended for clearing this damnable dust from one's throat."

"Thank you, sir, but I prefer to tidy my person first," I suggested.

"No. 6 for the gentleman," announced the clerk, returning to me my change from the bill.

I stuffed the money into my pocket—the colonel's singular eyes followed it with uncomfortable interest. The gnome picked up my bag, but was interrupted by my new friend.

"The privilege of showing the gentleman to his quarters and putting him at home shall be mine!"

"All right, colonel," the clerk carelessly consented.

"And my trunk. I have a trunk at the depot," I informed.

"The boy will 'tend to it."

I gave the gnome my check.

"And my bath?" I pursued.

"You will be notified, sir. There are only five ahead of you, and one gentleman now in. Your turn will come in about two hours."

"This way, suh! Kindly follow me," bade the colonel.

As he strode ahead, slightly listed by the weight of the bag in his left hand, I remarked a peculiar bulge elevating the portly contour of his right coat-skirt. We ascended a flight of rude stairs which quivered to our tread, proceeded down a canvas-lined corridor set at regular intervals on either hand with numbered deal doors, some open to reveal disorderly interiors; and with "Here you are, suh!" I was importantly bowed into No. 6.

We were not to be alone. There were three double beds—one well rumped, as if just vacated; one, the middle, tenanted by a frowzy-headed, whiskered man asleep in shirt-sleeves and revolver and boots; the third, at the other end, recently made up by having its blanket covering hastily thrown against a distinctly dirty pillow.

"Your bed yonduh, suh, I reckon," prompted the colonel, depositing my bag with a grunt of relief. "Now, suh, as you say, you desire to freshen the outer man after your journey. With your permission I will await your pleasure, suh; and your toilet being completed we will freshen the inner man also with some good likker."

I gazed about, sickened. Item, three beds; item, one kitchen chair; item, one unpainted board wash-stand, supporting a tin basin, a cake of soap, a tin ewer, with a dingy towel hanging from a nail under a cracked mirror and over a tin slop-bucket; item, three spittoons, one beside each bed; item, a row of nails in a wooden strip, plainly for wardrobe purposes; item, one window, with broken pane.

The board floor was bare and creaky, the partition walls were of stained muslin, formerly white, through which sifted unrebuked a mixture of sounds not thoroughly agreeable.

The colonel had seated himself upon a bed; the bulge underneath his skirts jutted more pronouncedly, and had the outlines of a revolver butt.

"But surely I can get a room to myself!" I stammered. "The clerk mistakes me. This won't do at all!"

"You are having the best in the house, suh," asserted the colonel, with an expansive wave of his thick hand. He spat accurately into the nearest spittoon. "It is a front room, suh. No. 6 is known as very choice, and I congratulate you, suh. I myself will see to it that you shall have your bed to yourself, if you entertain objections to doubling up. We are a trifle crowded in Benton City just at present, owing to the unprecedented influx of new citizens. You must remember, suh, that we are less than one month old, and we are accommodating from three to five thousand people."

"Is this the best hotel?" I demanded.

"It is so reckoned, suh. There are other hostleries, and I do not desire, suh, to draw invidious comparisons, their proprietors being friends of mine; but I will go so far as to say that the Queen caters only to the elite, suh. Its patronage is gilt-edged."

I stepped to the window, the lower sash of which was up, and gazed down into that dust-fogged, noisy, turbulent main street, full of floury human beings and grime-smear'd beasts almost within touch, boiling about through the narrow lane between the makeshift structures. I lifted my smarting eyes, and across the hot sheet-iron roofs I saw the country to the south—a reddish, white-blotched desert stretching on, desolate, lifeless under the sunset, to a range of stark hills black against the glow.

"There are no private rooms, then?" I asked, choking with a gulp of despair.

"You are perfectly private right here, suh," assured the colonel. "You may strip to the hide, or you may sleep with your boots on, and no questions asked. Gener'ly speaking, gentlemen prefer to retain a layer of artificial covering; but you ain't troubled much with the bugs, are you, Bill?"

He leveled this query at the whiskered man, who had awakened and was blinking contentedly.

"I'm too alkalied, I reckon," Bill responded. "Varmints will leave me any time when there's fresh bait handy. That's why I like to double up. That there St. Louie drummer carried off most of 'em from this gent's bed, so I guess he's safe!"

"You are again to be congratulated, suh," said the colonel to me. "Allow me to interduce you two gentlemen. Shake hands with my friend Mr. Bill Brady. Bill, I present to you a fellow citizen of mine from grand old New York State."

The frowzy man struggled up, shifted his revolver so as not to sit on it, and extended his hand.

"Proud to make yore acquaintance, sir! Any friend of the colonel's is a friend o' mine."

"We will likker up directly," the colonel informed us; "but fust the gentleman desires to attend to his person. Mr. Brady, suh," he continued for my benefit, "is one of our leading citizens, being proprietor of—what is it now, Bill?"

"Wa'all," said Mr. Brady, "I've pulled out o' the Last Chance, and I'm on spec. The Last Chance got a leetle too much on the brace for healthy play; and when that son of a gun of a miner from South Pass City shot it up, I quit."

"Naturally," consoled the colonel. "Mr. Brady," he explained, "has been one of our most distinguished bankers, but he has retired from that industry and is considering other investments."

"The bath-room? Where is it, gentlemen?" I ventured.

"If you will step outside the door, suh, you can hear the splashing down the hall. It is the custom, however, for gentlemen at tub to keep the bath-room door closed, in case of ladies promenading. You will have time foh your preliminary toilet and foh a little refreshment and a *pasear* in town. I judge, with five ahead of you and one in, the clerk was mighty near right when he said about two hours. That allows twenty minutes to each gentleman, which is the limit. A gentleman who requires more than twenty minutes to insure his respectability, suh, is too dirty foh such accommodations. He should resort to the river. Ain't that so, Bill?"

"Perfectly correct, colonel. I kin take an all-over, myself, in fifteen, whenever it's healthy."

"But a dollar and a half for a twenty minutes' bath in a public tub is rather

steep, it seems to me," I blurted, as I removed my coat and opened my bag.

"Not so, suh, if I may question your judgment," the colonel reproved. "The tub, suh, is private to the person in it. He is never intruded upon unless he hawks his time or the water disagrees with him. The fluid, suh, is hauled from the river by a toilsome journey of three miles. You understand, suh, that this great and growing city is founded upon the sheer face of the Red Desert, where the railroad stopped—the river being occupied by a government reservation named Fort Steele. The government—the United States government, suh—having corralled the river where the railroad crosses, we are compelled, until we can procure a nearer supply by artesian wells or by laying a pipe-line, to haul our water bodily, for ablution purposes, at ten dollars the barrel, or ten cents, one dime, the bucket. A bath, suh, uses up considerable water, even if at a slight reduction you are privileged to double up with another gentleman."

I shuddered at the thought of thus "doubling up." How my stomach sank and my gorge rose as I rummaged through my bag, and with my toilet articles in hand faced the wash-stand.

The two intently watched my operations. The colonel craned over to peer into my valise—and presently I could interpret his curiosity.

"The prime old Bourbon served at the first-class New York bars still maintains its reputation, I dare hope, suh?" he interrogated.

"I cannot say, I'm sure," I replied.

"No, suh," he agreed. "Doubtless you are partial to your own stock. That bottle which I see doesn't happen to be a sample of your favorite preservative?"

"That?" I retorted. "It is toilet-water. I am sorry to say I have no liquor with me."

"The deficiency will soon be forgotten, suh," the colonel bravely consoled. "Bill, we shall have to personally conduct this gentleman and provide him with the proper entertainment."

"What is your special line o' business, if you don't mind my axing?" Bill invited.

"I am out here for my health, at present," said I, vainly hunting a clean spot on the towel. "I have been advised by my physician to seek a place in the Far West that is high and dry. Benton"—I laughed

miserably—"is certainly dry, and high, too, judging by the rates."

"Healthily dry, suh, in the matter of water," the colonel approved. "We are not cursed by the humidity of New York State, grand old State that she is. Foh those who require water, there is the Platte only three miles distant. The nearer proximity of water we consider a detriment to the robustness of a community. Our rainy weather is toler'ly infrequent. The last spell we had—lemme see. There was a brief shower, scurcely enough to sanction a parasol by a lady, last May, warn't it, Bill? When we was camped at Rawlin's Springs, shooting antelope."

"Some're about that time; but didn't last long—not more'n two minutes," Bill responded.

"As foh fluids demanded by the human system, we are abundantly blessed, suh. There is scurcely any popular brand that you can't get in Benton, and I hold that we have the most skilful mixologists in history. There are some who are artists—artists, suh; but mainly we prefer our likker straight."

"We're high, too," Bill put in. "Well over seven thousand feet, 'cording to them railroad engineers."

"Yes, suh, you are a mile and more nearer heaven here in Benton than you were when beside the noble Hudson," supplemented the colonel. "And the prices of living are reasonable; foh money, suh, is cheap and ready to hand. No drink is less than two bits, and a man won't tote a match across a street foh less than a drink. Money grows, suh, for the picking. Our merchants are clearing thirty thousand dollars a month, and the professional gentleman who tries to limit his game is considered a low-down tin-horn. Yes, suh, this is the greatest terminal of the greatest railroad in the known world. It has Omaha, No'th Platte, and Cheyenne beat to a frazzle. You cannot fail to prosper." They had been critically watching me wash and rearrange my clothing. "You are not heeled, suh, I see?"

"Heeled?" I repeated.

"Equipped with a shooting-iron, suh. Or do you intend to remedy that deficiency also?"

"I have not been in the habit of carrying arms."

"'Most everybody packs a gun or a bowie," Bill remarked. "Gents and ladies

both tote 'em; but there's no law ag'in' not."

I had finished my meager toilet, and was glad, for the espionage had been more or less annoying.

"Now I am at your service during a short period, gentlemen," I announced. "Later I have an engagement, and shall ask to be excused."

The colonel arose with alacrity. Bill seized his hat hanging at the head of the bed.

"A little liquid refreshment is in order fust, I reckon," quoth the colonel. "I claim the privilege, of course. After that—you have sporting blood, suh? You will desire to take a turn or two foh the honor of the Empire State?"

The inference was not quite clear. To develop it I replied guardedly, albeit unwilling to pose as a milksop.

"I assuredly am not averse to any legitimate amusement."

"That's it," Bill commended. "Nobody is who has red blood in him; and a fellow kin see you've cut yore eye-teeth. What might you prefer in line of a pass-the-time?"

"What is there, if you please?" I encouraged.

He and the colonel gravely contemplated each other. Bill scratched his head, and slowly closed one eye.

"There's a good open game of stud at the North Star," he proffered. "I kin get the gentleman a seat. No limit."

"Maybe our friend's luck don't run to stud," hazarded the colonel. "Stud exacts powers of concentration, like faro." And he also closed one eye. "It's rather early in the evening foh close quarters. Are you particularly partial to the tiger or the cases, suh?" he queried of me. "Or would you be able to secure transient happiness in short games, foh a starter, while we move along, like a bee from flower to flower, gathering his honey?"

"If you are referring to gambling, sir," I answered, "you have chosen a poor companion; but I do not intend to be a spoilsport, and I shall be glad to have you show me whatever you think worth while, in the city, so far as I have the leisure."

"That's it, that's it, suh!" The colonel appeared delighted. "Let us libate to the gods of chance, gentlemen; and then take a stroll."

"My bag will be safe here?" I prompted as we were about to file out.

"Absolutely, suh. Personal property is respected in Benton. We'd hang the man who moved that bag of yours the fraction of one inch!"

This at least was comforting. As much could not be said of New York City. The colonel led down the echoing hall and the shaking stairs into the lobby, which was peopled, as before, by men in all modes of attire, clustered mainly at the bar. He led directly to the bar itself.

"Three, Ed. Name your likker, gentlemen! A little Double X foh me, Ed."

"Old rye," Bill briefly ordered.

The bartender set out bottle and whisky-glasses, and looked upon me. I felt that the bystanders were waiting. My garb proclaimed the "pilgrim," but I was resolved to be my own master, and for liquor I had no taste.

"Lemonade, if you have it," I faltered.

"Yes, sir!"

The bartender cracked not a smile, but a universal sigh, broken by a few sniggers, voiced the appraisal of the audience. Some of the loafers eyed me amusedly, some turned away.

"Surely, suh, you will temper that with a dash of fortifiah?" the colonel protested. "A pony of brandy, Ed—or just a dash to cut the water in it. To me, suh, the water in this country is vile—inimical to the human stomach."

"Thank you," said I, "but I prefer plain lemonade."

"The gent wants his pizen straight, same as the rest of you," calmly remarked the bartender.

My lemonade being prepared, the colonel and Bill tossed off full glasses of whisky, acknowledged with throaty "A-ah!" and smack of lips; and I hastily quaffed my lemonade. From the dollar which the colonel grandly flung upon the bar he received no change—by which I might figure that whereas whisky was twenty-five cents the glass, lemonade was fifty cents.

We issued into the street, and were at once engulfed by a ferment of sights and sounds extraordinary. Amid all the tumult, however, I was thinking of my appointed rendezvous with my lady of the blue eyes, and watching for an opportunity to learn what manner of place the Big Tent might be.

(To be continued in the September number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

The Dark Death

THE STORY OF A MAN'S DECISION IN A TEST OF COURAGE

By William Merriam Rouse

ON a bright April morning John Pelham Chittenden, president and largest stockholder of the Ajax Brush Company, sat in his private office looking out upon the sun-gilded stone and steel of lower Broadway. With the calm of ignorance he awaited the messenger of destiny.

The private office was large, in a building of valuable space; and from Chittenden's personality it had taken an air of deliberative, idealized efficiency. The dull mahogany furniture, the few soft rugs and good pictures, gave it the appearance of being the businesslike study of a professional man. Not less deceptive was the lean, kindly presence of Chittenden himself, who was a dreamer voluntarily harnessed to business.

A preliminary knock of courtesy, and the messenger of destiny crossed the threshold in the person of his vice-president and general manager, Elkins Hammond. Hammond was a business man of the obvious type, shrewd, capable, honest, and courageous. He drew a chair up to the president's work-table and spread out an armful of books and papers with quick, deft movements.

"Well, Elkins!" said Chittenden cordially, smiling as he pushed his cigar-case across the table. "Have you got Ajax Brush down to dollars and cents for me?"

"Yes," replied Hammond, but without an answering smile and without noticing the cigar-case.

"What's the answer?"

The president did not lose his cheerfulness, although made vaguely apprehensive by the manner of the other.

"Do you want to have it straight—in a sentence?"

"Yes."

Hammond drew a deep breath.

"If we liquidate at once," he said slowly, "we can pay the stockholders twenty-five cents on the dollar."

Just before that announcement Chittenden had settled down in his comfortable chair, with his gaze roaming out over the ragged wilderness of buildings. When Hammond's words struck him he did not move, the fingers that held his cigar aloft did not tremble; because, for the moment, he was as completely paralyzed as if a steel-jacketed bullet had pierced the window glass and bored into his skull.

It was but a matter of seconds, however, before his brain cleared. A hundred questions leaped into his mind and struggled for utterance. He forced them back, striving to arrange them in an intelligent order, and selected one.

"Are you sure?"

"I've got the proof here," replied Hammond. "Been up to the factory and spent a week there; and it's taken me several days here in the office to sift things to the bottom."

"Assuming that you're right," said Chittenden, "how is it that a well-conducted business can get into such a situation so quickly? Two months ago I went into every detail myself, as you know, and we were showing a reasonable profit."

"Right, John. Two months ago it did not seem possible that the business could fail to carry on. Our credit was as good as anybody's in these times. The volume of orders was good. The labor situation was so bad that it didn't seem possible it could be any worse, and therefore it could be discounted. Deliveries of raw material were uncertain, but we had been enduring that without disaster."

"Then what has happened?"

"All the possible misfortunes—everything at once. The biggest foreign order

we ever had has just been canceled because of failure to deliver on time. The goods are more than three-quarters ready, and there is no outlet in this country, under present conditions, for them in addition to our regular sales. So that much potential money is out of the game for the present. The delay was caused partly by labor, partly by car shortage and consequent non-delivery of raw material. There is quite a total of smaller domestic orders which have been affected in the same way. To keep at capacity, especially for this big foreign order, we have met three demands for wage increases within four months. We can't go on!"

"I should have foreseen this," murmured the president, still with his unseeing gaze fixed upon the roofs.

"It was more my business than yours to foresee," exclaimed Hammond bitterly. "No one could have done it. There was always hope, until this week."

"Then we can't weather it?"

"Not with things as they are—a growing pessimism, every indication of tight money, curtailed consumption, reduced output. The banks are growing cautious, John, and the next Presidential election is a year and a half away. Nothing can be found in our situation to help us."

"You mean, then, that the help must come from outside?"

Hammond lifted his eyebrows and shrugged.

"We are carrying all the loans we can get. If I were a bank, I would not let Ajax Brush have another dollar. It would be playing a bet."

"A bad bet, do you think?"

"A man who lent Ajax Brush fifty thousand dollars would have practically no chance of getting it back. A loan of a hundred thousand would give him an even chance. That opinion is backed by every report on the table."

"I would take the risk myself if—" Chittenden suddenly roused himself out of his abyss of thought and faced squarely around in his chair. "You advise liquidation, then?"

"Yes!"

"Very well. I'll think it over and give you a decision either to-morrow or the day after. Then we'll call a meeting of the directors."

Hammond rose and moved to the door.

"We'll have to," he said. "There are

obligations due in a week, and we can't meet them."

The vice-president went out, and Chittenden was left alone, with the evidence of failure lying before him upon the table. He swept a pile of factory reports toward him and began to go over them. Long after office hours he worked that night, making certain that there was no possible loophole of escape which Hammond had missed.

After the first shock of the news Chittenden had fancied that he might be in some measure to blame. At the end of his work he was sure that he was in no way responsible for the catastrophe. Nor had he laid any foundation for such a failure. He was a New Englander, and he had always been sane, conservative. He had proceeded carefully from the beginning, when he had taken his father's little brush factory, organized a stock company, and started toward the big manufacturing plant which he now controlled. Consciously he had fought for conservatism, in order to counterbalance his tendency to see romance in helping to brush the coats and shave the faces of the world.

II

THAT night John Pelham Chittenden carried home with him the knowledge that he must choose between two clear cut alternatives. Before he allowed himself even to consider the choice, he wanted to talk with his wife.

He owned a cozy half-size house in the East Sixties, near Fifth Avenue. Into that house the presence of his wife and their two children fitted like rare jewels in a worthy setting. Constance had come from the same town, and their families had known each other for three generations.

She had always been his ideal of womanhood. Underneath that shell, often very thin, which the New Englander wears, Chittenden carried for her a white and flaming devotion which at times threatened to consume him by its pent heat. For he had never dared to reveal it all. It is not fitting that a man should be first to reveal things of this kind, and Chittenden knew it. He had often tried to open the way for a mutual recognition of it, but the way had never opened. There seemed to be a thin veil in the air.

Not that Constance lacked in any particular. He knew that she would have

died for him or for the children; in things great and small her husband and her children were first. Invariably she met him when he came home at night, charming, immaculate, with unaffected gladness in her eyes at his coming. She was such a wife as all men want and few men get.

Chittenden entered the little reception-room—a fragment of the personality of Constance, with its unobtrusive prints and its neutral, yet warm, hangings. He listened. There came the tap of her slippers upon the stairs; then she stood at the landing, smiling down. She was ten years younger than he; slender, dignified, child-like, poised.

His feet carried him springing up to her, and her head went against his shoulder—cloudy black, giving to his nostrils the delicacy of a Maytime forest. The muscles of his arms and shoulders suddenly contracted. Constance stood away from him.

"Something's happened," she said gravely. "I can feel it, dear!"

"We'll talk it over after dinner," he replied. "I must dress soon."

He managed to smile, leading her to the nursery. Young John, aged eight, came forward with a "Hello, daddy!" and shook hands according to custom. Constance, four, left the nursemaid and leaped into her father's outstretched arms. Words failed her when he came home. She rubbed her tangle of black hair into his eyes, she patted his ears and cooed, she worshiped even his coat, because it was his.

Chittenden began to feel better, and with his dinner coat he was almost himself again. He had become fully poised when, having dined, they went up to the library and made themselves comfortable in that place of much-used books, big chairs, and a broad old fireplace framed in black marble. Sitting close beside Constance, with his most time-bitten pipe giving forth a cloud of fragrant smoke, he told her the story of the day.

"Ajax Brush," he explained, "is, as you know, a half-million-dollar stock company. The stock, which has never been listed, was sold to investors at par, and it is held largely by people of our State—people who knew my father and who know me. Almost all of them are people of small means, and many of them are dependent upon this stock, which has paid ten and twelve per cent until this year, for their income. Liquidation now means that we shall dis-

charge all the company's debts, and that a man or woman who paid a hundred dollars for a share of stock will receive about twenty-five dollars."

"And your money, John?" she asked, as he paused to relight his pipe.

"Practically every cent that I have ever earned is in the company. I hold about two hundred thousand dollars of the stock, par value."

"Then you will have fifty thousand left?"

"That is right," he replied slowly. He blew a dense cloud of smoke and stared into it. "You know, also, that I have something besides the money I have made. There was about sixty thousand from Aunt Mary. Now with that and what mother left me I could get together a hundred thousand dollars outside of the business. I have always kept the inherited money apart, as a sort of protection for you and the children."

"Yes," she agreed. "Go on!"

"We will put aside the idea of turning over our money to the stockholders, for the best I could do would not pay them a hundred cents on the dollar. But Hammond says, and he is right, that if a hundred thousand of new money were thrown into the business now, there would be an even chance of swinging Ajax Brush through to better times and permanent success. If I play safe, which I have a right to do, I shall have enough left to make a fresh start. If I gamble and lose, every dollar that is between you and the children and real poverty will be gone. That is the decision to be made. Tell me, Constance, what do you think?"

To him it seemed a long time before she raised her eyes to his. They were steady but very grave.

"It is for you to decide, John," she said.

"It concerns you, dearest, and the children much more than it does me."

"That is why it is for you to decide."

He had not thought of it just in that way, and the thought was disconcerting.

"There is a poverty which takes hold of the stomach," he said at length, "which sucks like a leech at the self-respect of even the strongest."

"If you decide that way, and that is the result, I can meet it, John," she replied, and he believed her.

"If I decide that way, and that is the result, you—I—I can't say what's in my

mind. I can't express it; but I can say that I would rather die than have anything separate us!"

She got up and came over to his chair. She sat upon the arm of it, with her cheek against his forehead and her arms very tight about his neck.

"John, my dear husband," she whispered, "I married a man, not a fortune. Perhaps even that's more than I ought to say now. It's for you to decide this matter, both because you are head of the family and because you are the one who will have to bear the full weight and consequence of the decision. There are a good many ways of looking at this, and right is not always the same thing. If you are sure of yourself, you can do anything, everything; but if you force yourself to a course which you think must be right, but which you, in your heart, do not want to follow, you will fail. The money involved is not the thing; neither is an abstract principle the thing. That's all I can say."

Suddenly she left him. She fairly whisked away from his chair, and he heard the door close behind her before he realized that she was going.

She had helped and strengthened him; she had also hindered and confused him. There was much food for thought in what she had said. In this hour he loved her a thousand times more than ever before; and yet never more clearly had he felt the presence of the misty veil between them. It seemed to him that they should both have known the answer to the problem; that the same answer should have sprung from each heart. Or was he expecting too much of life. of love?

III

CHITTENDEN was tired. He got up and turned out the reading-lamp, so that he could be alone with the firelight. He filled his pipe again and sat down. He must think the thing out.

Two answers, and only one of them could possibly be right! He became conscious that he was groping, and had been groping all day, for a sign of some kind. In one way, he had been searching for a sign when he put the question to Constance.

His brain was working too hard. It rebelled quietly, and after a little time the fire lulled him into a kind of waking somnolence. His tired mind wandered aimless-

ly between the future and the past. The flames became feeble, decreased to a single uncertain ribbon, and died out. For a long time the coals glowed red. Then they dimmed into ashes, and there was no longer any light in the room except a faint glow against the inside of the fireplace. Chittenden could barely see, as a band of deeper blackness, the marble slab above it.

While he stared, unthinking, a nebulous spot appeared against the black. It was more like a little fragment of cloud than anything else, and he paid no attention to it. If he had any thought at all, it was that his eyes had been strained that day.

The cloud nucleus spread and grew more distinct. He brushed the back of his hand across his forehead, but it did not do any good. He still saw the shapeless patch of translucence against the black marble.

He regarded the plaque of light gray with something approaching interest now, particularly as it appeared to be taking shape and a degree of color within itself. He watched, wondering, while the haziness cleared slowly, until within the hitherto inchoate depths he saw a bit of landscape with small human figures in it.

In the foreground Chittenden made out the figure of a man, squatting in front of a small fire and hemmed about by a semicircle of large boulders. Behind the man a larger fire revealed a cave mouth at the bottom of a cliff. A woman, broad-backed and only partially clothed in an irregular garment of skin, was cooking there. The hair that straggled about her neck and shoulder was unlovely in its neglect; but when she turned, the bright little eyes that jeweled her face made up for this and all other defects. They seemed to light her with human kindliness.

She paused in her work long enough to cuff two fat and dirty youngsters who lay covered with skins at the cave mouth; and then she bore a smoking dish and placed it before the man.

The picture, which had cleared to a sharpness of detail, clouded again. Chittenden bent forward eagerly. He now wished to see it; and slowly, as if in response to his desire, it grew distinct. The man in the picture put down the bone he had been gnawing and reached for the smoking dish. He dipped in his hand and ate.

Hair covered his long and muscular arms, it bristled upon his short legs, it showed in

a thatch above the skin that hung from one shoulder. His beard and hair were matted, and whatever softness might have been in his face was concealed by the gaze that he flung out from his roving eyes—a gaze of mingled bravery, fear, and defiance.

When the dish was empty, the man in the picture licked his fingers and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. Then he wiped the hand upon a hairy thigh. It was at this point, just as the man was getting up, that John Pelham Chittenden felt himself in some way identified with what he saw. He did not lose his sense of identity as a spectator, but at the same time he felt that he was the other also, thinking with his mind, acting with him. Those non-professionals who have seen their actions reproduced in moving pictures know the sensation.

Chittenden understood that his name was Strongback, that the woman Goodface was his. He picked up a roughly made bow which lay beside him, did Strongback, and went beyond the circle of boulders.

The instant that he was out of the circle of firelight Strongback became pitted against a world full of an infinite number of terrors. All that was partially hidden by day was abroad and menacing by night. He walked upon the balls of his feet, with his head thrust forward and the bow strung ready for use in his hand.

There was a moon, but not a great deal of light penetrated into the forest. Tall, straight trees interlaced a canopy of branches above marshy ground. Strongback picked his way from one exposed root to another, to a tuft of grass, a dry spot. Often he stopped, half hidden by a trunk, to look ahead and listen.

A feeling of danger was in the atmosphere. Smell, hearing, and intuition all indicated it, although it was not definite. Chittenden now knew that it was some unusual menace which had drawn Strongback forth into the night to investigate. At length he halted upon the bank of a small, swift stream, and held his nose and ears up to the moving currents of air.

There was no sound in the library, but there was the consciousness of sound in the picture. At first it was no more than a feeling of vibration in the darkness. Strongback's teeth chattered. He looked wildly to right, to left, and behind; but not toward that vibration, the direction of which had rapidly become manifest. He

opened his lips, and Chittenden knew that he had named it.

"The dark death!"

This was no ordinary tragedy of the prehistoric night. It was some spirit more terrible than death, some unusual and awful focusing of the elemental forces of destruction. There was a stirring through the tree-tops. The earth trembled. A sound of hate grew from the vibration, and filled the air. It was the sound of hatred for all things and all thoughts growing in life toward beauty. It was wilful slaughter of the good and beautiful expressed by a sound.

The approaching terror became more clearly defined as to direction. It was moving swiftly, and yet with a kind of deliberateness that spoke consciousness of invincible power, toward the cave. Strongback himself was not directly in its path. If he remained where he was, he would probably be safe. Strongback knew it. His bowels had turned to water and his soul had become smoke.

Goodface was not strong enough to roll the great boulder in front of the cave. Without her mate she was not strong enough in mind and body to get the cubs out of the way, to think, to plan in the presence of death. Without Strongback, Goodface and the cubs were close to doom.

The moon rode high, calm, still, luminous, round, and perfect. She was the night spirit, mate to the day spirit, even as both were parents of the star children which they sent down to earth as the Firegod. She was not afraid. The dark death could not touch her. There was something mightier than the terror.

Strongback dropped his bow upon the lush grass of the river bank and knelt with arms uplifted to the night goddess.

The dark death went on drawing nearer to the cave, the moon changed not, but the prayer of Strongback was answered. Courage flowed into him. He felt bigger than the mysterious enemy. He grasped his bow and leaped to his feet. He could face the dark death!

He began to run. Snorting and panting, he plunged through the forest, regardless now of any lesser dangers. He tripped and fell, only to rise and bound on again with greater speed.

Goodface was in a fair way to die. She crouched outside the cave, with the cubs gathered to her and the fires burning.

Strongback knew that she was afraid, without him, to face darkness.

His horny feet kicked the fires scattering to embers; his hands flung the cubs, now too frightened to cry out, into the cave. He sent Goodface after them, and set arms and shoulders to a great boulder that lay beside the entrance. His head sank between his humped shoulders, and muscles stood out in mounds under his hair. The boulder turned over and blocked the mouth of the cave, except for an irregular opening at one corner. Through this opening Strongback squeezed; instantly to show his face there. His little glittering eyes watched.

The thunder of the mysterious approach filled the world. It drew on apace, now with incredible swiftness. The top of the forest swayed and tossed and cracked. The sound of rending wood was like the crash of many waves. The whole merged into a great, obliterating roar, reached an apex, and began to die away even faster than it had risen in the past few seconds.

Not all of the wave receded. Out of the forest, smashing and tearing at branches as he came, heaved a huge creature. Little more than his own length from the mouth of the cave he came to a reeling halt. He was like an unbelievably exaggerated elephant—higher, broader, more powerful, with great ears, a dark hide plastered with scales of mud and slime, and long, curving tusks.

With eyes wicked and cunning and blood-lustful, this bit of spray from the wave of the dark death stood hesitant. He was looking at the spot where the embers glowed.

Through a long span of seconds the picture held like that; dark death mad with the lust to kill, the face of Strongback watching, and the dimming thunder and crash of the receding herd. Then dark death turned with a bellow of hatred against all things that were and plunged into the tortured forest.

Strongback slipped out over the boulder, and Goodface followed him. She knelt before him and threw her arms around his knees; she rubbed her cheek against his leg.

"Mangod!" she said, looking up.

Strongback raised her to her feet, and then lifted his arms toward the yellow moon. Goodface imitated him. It was the first time they had prayed together.

The picture began to fade from before

Chittenden's gaze; and this time his mind was too full to make an effort to hold it. The figures faded, melted into the background; the whole resolved into its components of cloudy nuclei and faded out completely. Chittenden rubbed his eyes. There was nothing in front of him but the dead blackness of the marble slab.

He sprang up and looked around the room. Darkness! Only an exceedingly faint glow came from the fire. He found himself trembling.

"What was it?" he whispered to the empty room. "Does it mean anything, or am I going mad?"

There was no answer.

IV

As soon as John Chittenden, heavy-eyed, had made a pretense of eating breakfast the following morning, he started for the office of his friend, Dr. Emery Henderson. Dr. Henderson was a pugnacious savant with half a dozen degrees, earned and honorary. He had taken medicine and specialized in psychiatry. He was a paleontologist and archeologist of some note. He let himself be called an atheist, although he was at most no more than agnostic. He professed to scorn the entire human race, while he devoted a good part of his time to a medical practise made up of indigent patients.

Chittenden found the doctor eating bread and milk upon a table littered with cigar-stubs, empty beer-bottles, papers, books, and fossils. Dr. Henderson, who had the physical appearance of a well-fleshed, cheerful mummy, wiped his glasses, grinned, and waved a hand most fearfully and wonderfully stained and grimed by his dark scientific prowls.

"Sit down, Chittenden," he said. "You're in trouble!"

"Yes," agreed Chittenden, not surprised at a keenness of perception which had seemed uncanny upon first acquaintance.

He began with the simple statement that he had been worried by serious business troubles which demanded a prompt and difficult decision. From that he passed to a description, as carefully accurate as he could make it, of his experience of the night before.

Dr. Henderson heard him in a silence broken only by an occasional quick and searching question. Having finished his meal, he lighted a cigar-stub and at inter-

vals exuded smoke from mouth and nose. Not until his visitor had completely run down did he make any comment. Then he began to speak.

"You think there's something wrong with your mind," he said. "There is no evidence of such a condition. You have merely been indulging in the ancient and probably harmless pastime of crystal-gazing."

"There wasn't any crystal," interrupted Chittenden. "You didn't understand me, doctor."

"I understood you perfectly, and the less you interrupt me the more information you'll get. Crystal-gazing, or scrying, has been practised since prehistoric times. It is, exactly, the induction of visual hallucinations by concentrating the gaze on any clear deep. There is no trance, no sleep, no autohypnotism. It is not the visualization of the imagination, nor is it hypnagogic illusion. The subject is awake and sane, and may sometimes carry on a conversation while seeing the pictures. About one in twenty of the human race is successful at crystal-gazing, so far as has been ascertained. In character it may be somewhat similar to chromatic audition, which is the vivid association of certain sounds with certain colors. I could tell you a lot more, but it isn't necessary.

"Historically this interesting phenomenon was produced in classical Greece by means of a mirror, in Egypt with a pool of ink. An aboriginal Australian tribe used a hole filled with water, the Huille-che of South America a slab of polished black stone—that's where you come in. The black marble fireplace was your medium. A finger-nail, a sword-blade, a glass of sherry, a drop of blood, have all been used. The early church condemned the *specularii* as practitioners of divination. Fumigations and incantations have often been used as aids to scrying, but they are effective only by suggestion.

"Scientific opinion admits the existence of these phenomena without explaining them. George Sand, like you, discovered her capacity by accident. You see you have distinguished company. As a matter of fact, crystal-gazing is no more abnormal than dreaming. Persons of intellectual and moral probity, who have experimented, assert that knowledge of a supranormal character is sometimes shown, and that the pictures contain something more than telep-

athy, more than clairvoyance or *vue à distance*. Hegel's theory of the sensitive soul or Myers's theory of the subliminal self would be applicable in explanation. 'The intuitive soul,' says Hegel, 'oversteps the conditions of time and space; it beholds things remote, things long past, and things to come.'

"I think I have destroyed your notion that your mind was becoming unbalanced. Now let us examine the pictures themselves. I should place your man as a little lower than the Crô-Magnon type, and in the upper paleolithic age. *Homo sapiens* had come. All dates are unsatisfactory, but I should say that your man was in the post-glacial era of about twenty-five thousand years ago. He had probably not yet reached that degree of culture which produced polished stone implements. The large beast might have been the woolly mammoth. Altogether you've had a very interesting experience, and you might amuse yourself with the polished marble slab now and then. It's better than anything they've had on Broadway in the past twenty-five years."

The doctor ceased speaking, and grinned. Chittenden opened his mouth, only to close it again. The long monolog had answered every question that he had had in mind, and more. Dr. Henderson regarded him like a good-natured satyr through half a minute of silence, and then he spoke again.

"You had a problem," he said, "and something unusual happened. I don't believe in signs, portents, miracles, or gods; but I do believe in the mystery called the subconscious mind. Dig something out of those pictures for yourself. Go home and dig it out, my son!"

Chittenden got up and reached his hand across the table. The doctor met it firmly, with human warmth.

"Thank you," said Chittenden. "You've set my mind at rest. Better than that, you've given me an idea. I'm going to get it alone and shake the devil out of it!"

"That's the way to talk, John! Come again!"

V

CHITTENDEN went out of the doctor's apartment-house and began to walk. He moved on mechanically, his stick clasped behind his back and his head bowed.

All through the long night of wakefulness he had had the feeling expressed by Dr. Henderson—that there was something in the pictures that had special significance for him; but then he had doubted, because he had been laboring under the fear that his mind was in an abnormal condition. Now the doctor had disabused him of that belief. His brain labored, turning over and over the possibilities of meaning in what he had seen.

Suddenly he saw that there was one obvious feature which needed no esoteric quality to give it meaning. In the face of danger Strongback had saved his wife and children!

Strongback had hesitated, but in the end he had protected what he held most dear. The actual physical parallel was so plain that it could not be ignored. Human nature, as wise men said, was the same in the twentieth century as it had been in the dawn of the paleolithic. Chittenden could take the money to which his stock gave him a right, and with his private fortune could save his family from even the inconveniences of retrenchment.

This conception came to him during the late afternoon, after he had walked many miles and spent hours over his luncheon in a quiet restaurant. The conception, which amounted practically to a decision, satisfied him intellectually, but it did not wholly give him that feeling of peace which he sought.

Thus it was that when street-lights scattered the gathering dusk he found himself sitting upon a bench in Washington Square, not yet quite ready to go home to Constance with the results of his thinking. He must go very shortly, however, for it would be time to dress for dinner. Afterward he would tell her of his decision and how he had reached it. He would say that he was going to call a directors' meeting at once and get the disagreeable business over as soon as possible.

He now was of the opinion that Constance had hinted this course of action in what she had said the night before. He saw how plainly her words were capable of this interpretation.

Actual darkness came, and still Chittenden lingered in the square, staring idly up at the lighted cross that glows yellow-bright above the Judson Memorial. In a way it reminded him of Strongback's moon, golden against the deep sky, serene above

the night in which men struggled with the mighty forces of the world about them.

Strongback had prayed to the moon, but John Pelham Chittenden neither desired nor needed to pray to the cross, he told himself. He did not need to instil courage by auto-suggestion. Reason had led him to wisdom, and he had made his decision as to what he wished to do. He had the courage to do it. Strongback had worshiped the actual moon, while Chittenden knew that the light shining over his night was merely a symbol—a symbol of what? He discovered that he was asking the question of himself.

Of brotherhood!

The answer stood out suddenly in his mind, shining as brightly as the fiery cross against the sky. It was the symbol of the fraternity of humankind.

Chittenden leaped to his feet with an inarticulate murmur. He had never thought just that thought before. There was the answer to his problem. For it came to him quickly that the difference, and the only essential difference, between Strongback and John Pelham Chittenden was that the latter had grown a little in the stature of his being.

It had been countless ages before man, in the person of Strongback, had been able to make his self, his ego, reach out to cover his own flesh; before he had thrust up a groping hand and lifted his head above the abyss of selfishness. Twenty-five thousand years after Strongback, John Chittenden could make a little larger group of the children of earth who were one with the slug-gish self. That was progress!

Chittenden caught a taxicab, and sat upon the edge of the cushions, unconsciously pushing with every muscle in his body until he was able to leap out in front of his own doorway. He went in and up the stairs breathlessly, and into the library, before he found Constance. She rose, the hint of alarm in her eyes changing to joy as she looked.

"John!" she cried. "Something good has happened!"

Partially he calmed himself; for he had to tell her much before he could reach the great event of the past half-hour. He managed well with his experience of the night before, but when he came to what had happened in Washington Square that evening his sentences became broken, ragged, hurried.

"You and the children are me," he said; "and I was afraid of the dark death of poverty—really afraid. I understand that now; but I'm going to face the fight with every cent I have, because the stockholders are me, too! Do you see that? *They are us, Constance!* That's the measure of John Chittenden, and it isn't very big; but some day there'll be a bigger, nobler man, who'll be able to feel one with the whole race. In those days we shall be able to live up to the poets and the dreamers of the ages. All I can do now is the biggest thing I'm capable of doing—and I can't do any less!"

He found no more words. Indeed, he was not a little embarrassed by the emotion he had shown; but he had no time to think of that now.

A light had been growing behind the face of Constance, and as he finished she seemed to glow with a new radiance. Her eyes became star-bright. She unclasped her locked fingers, and in the abandonment of complete love she clung to him.

"My man!" she whispered.

The veil that had been between them from the beginning melted away forever. Chittenden's white flame of devotion had found its own.

TRIFLES

A KISS is such a little thing—

A trifle slight and airy,

A sentiment upon the wing

In pause that's momentary.

It may be, oh, so light and gay,

And bubbling o'er with laughter,

A bright ephemera of May

That dies without hereafter.

A kiss is such a little thing—

A favor lightly taken,

A song once sung that none resing,

A summer mood forsaken.

But ah, from Grecian Helen's lips

A kiss of promise, mystery,

May launch a thousand fighting ships,

And change the course of history.

A word is such a little thing,

So very quickly spoken,

It dies while still its accents ring;

'Tis just as quickly broken.

It may be, oh, so merry, light,

And like a shadow fleeting,

A whisper 'neath the veil of night,

A scarce-remembered greeting.

A word is such a little thing,

That leaves no fruit in dying,

That holds no promise for the spring

Where it is buried lying.

But ah, from lips that ponder well

A word may prove immortal,

And point the downward path to hell,

Or open heaven's portal!

William Wallace Whitelock

Herbert and the Child Mind

SHOWING HOW VICE MAY SOMETIMES BE ITS OWN REWARD

By William Slavens McNutt

TEDDY was a sweet child. At any rate, that's what his mother said. He didn't really mean any harm. His father said that. His grandmother testified that he was just wild—full of youthful spirits. His grandmother's husband added that Teddy was a good boy at heart.

To tell the plain truth, all this was a lie, a bunch of lies. If Teddy was a sweet child, vinegar is what we pour over our hot cakes at breakfast. If he didn't mean any harm, then the Kaiser was just a practical joker. If he was just full of youthful spirits, then that's all a mad rattlesnake is full of. If he was a good boy at heart, he was having heart trouble!

As a matter of fact, Teddy Leveridge was a seventy-five-pound fragment of red-headed Hades. The old Nick could have claimed him as his own, and any jury of men who had ever visited the Leveridges would have awarded him the boy without leaving their seats. He was as harmless as a loose tiger with a mean disposition and an empty stomach—just about!

His parents were firm with him. If he threw a pot of boiling water on some little playmate, they'd speak to him about it. They didn't let him run wild without a word of remonstrance.

Both Mary and Jack hated to punish their young son, but they would when it was necessary. If, when you were calling at the Leveridges', young Teddy sneaked up behind you with a long, sharp butcher-knife and buried about six inches of it in your anatomy, Mary would say:

"Why, Teddy! Do you think that's nice?"

If he said he did, she'd come right out and contradict him.

Jack would do his part in disciplining the youngster, too. When he pulled the knife out of the caller, he'd show his young son the blood and say:

"Now see! Naughty Teddy! If papa's little boy ever does anything like that again, papa spank. Naughty, naughty!"

Did that make the kid suffer? Well, hardly!

Teddy was really suffering from breach of contract. Mary and Jack were forever promising to do things to him—to whip him, to put him to bed without his supper, and similar helpful hints to young hellions; but they never made good.

I drove out to their place at Chester, one afternoon, for a round of golf with Jack, and stayed for dinner. I was sitting alone in the library when Teddy sneaked up behind me and smashed an egg on the top of my head. I don't know where he found that egg, but it must have been in some excellent hiding-place. Certainly it had remained safely hidden for a long, long time before he discovered it. It was an old, old egg. It made a loud, popping noise when it broke, and afterwards—ooh! I had to take a protracted bath and change from head to foot into some things Jack loaned me.

Jack and Mary were really stirred up about it. They not only spoke sharply to Teddy; they sent him off to bed without any dinner.

My clothes were a terrible mess, but I congratulated myself that it was worth the sacrifice if the young scamp was actually to be punished for something at last.

About half-way through dinner Mary asked to be excused for a moment. A few minutes later, Jack said he'd be right back, and disappeared.

Jack came back about twenty minutes later, looking sheepish. It seems that he had sneaked up-stairs with a leg of lamb and a couple of apple pies, or some such little snack as that, feeling that perhaps he'd been too severe on the youngster, after all. He found Mary already at the bed-

side of the poor, abused boy, with a few quarts of milk and some this, that, and the other thing from the ice-box.

It had been quite a touching family reunion, so Jack explained. It developed that the little fellow wasn't really to blame after all. No! It came out that it was all the result of Jack's having read the boy the story of Columbus making an egg stand on end. Young Teddy had been fired by an ambition to emulate the great Italian explorer. That the egg he had selected for his attempt was old and worn, and that it was the top end of me that he'd tried to make it stand on, were unfortunate incidents; but the main plot of the piece rather reflected credit on the youngster, didn't I think? Showed a commendable instinct to emulate the doings of great men, eh?

He brought me Mary's excuses. She felt that she must stay with the boy and atone for the damage that had been done to his feelings. I wouldn't mind, would I? And would I just as soon amuse myself a few minutes longer? He *would* like to skip upstairs and be sure of making his own peace with the poor youngster.

Oh, Teddy led a hard life! His parents admitted they didn't really understand him. It was lucky for the little roughneck that they didn't.

They were everlastingly worried about him—afraid they weren't doing the right thing by him, not educating him properly. When they happened to learn that Herbert Condon was a friend of mine, they wouldn't give me a minute's peace until I had promised them to bring him out. Herbert, they thought, might be able to understand Teddy—to explain their son to them; to prevent them from making some stupid blunder of treatment that would blight the tender, complicated young genius in the bud.

II

HERBERT, you know, is a psychologist. He probably knows as much as any man living about things that nobody can prove aren't so. If you like grape-fruit for your breakfast, Herbert can tell you why your great-grandmother was unhappy in her first marriage. If you admit that you are afraid of great heights, Herbert says:

"Ah, ha!"

And right away, according to Herbert, he knows more about the private family life of your arboreal ancestors than a backyard gossip can tell about the woman next

door. He knows all about dreams, and hankering, and why people don't want what they think they want, and why they're only happy when they get what they never thought about wishing for.

My personal opinion, which has no weight with anybody but myself, is that Herbert is a very likable four-flusher. I don't believe he knows anything more about things that nobody knows anything about, than anybody else does; but nobody can prove it on him.

"Your real life's ambition," he says to you, "is to own a white trotting horse with a black star on his forehead, and marry a red-headed girl with green eyes and a mean disposition."

"That's a lie!" you reply. "I don't care anything about horses of any description; I don't like 'em. If somebody to whom I had given a lavender necktie should send me Man o' War as a Christmas present, I'd think I was cheated. And I hate all red-headed women, no matter what their eyes or dispositions are. I don't like 'em, and I never did. You are one hundred per cent wrong!"

Herbert smiles a pitying, superior smile that makes you wish for a thick brick and a true throwing arm, and says:

"Ah, hah! That proves I'm right."

Then he says a lot of things that you can't deny, because you don't know what they mean, and insists that what he has said is proof. Maybe it is; but if they could send men to prison on such proof as that, there wouldn't be any juries. There couldn't be. There wouldn't be men enough out of jail to make a jury.

Herbert's specialty is children. He knows the child mind as no one has ever known it. That's what the foreword in his last book says. He has never had any children of his own to bother with, so he's had plenty of time to study and analyze other people's. No metropolitan Sunday supplement is really complete without some sort of an article by Herbert on the child mind.

To Herbert, the child mind is like what electricity is to Thomas Edison. It hasn't got a chance—no privacy at all, no secrets. It is as naked, to him, as a plucked turkey in a butcher-shop window, and as simple as the man who buys oil stock twice.

There is nothing simple about Herbert, though. I'll say not! He makes a good fat living writing that sort of stuff, and the

law can't touch him. He's not legally liable in any way; and yet they arrest men who sell fake mining-stock and send them to jail!

There ain't no justice. At least the mining-stock swindler supplies the suckers with beautifully printed certificates as a remembrance. Also, he's a sport. He takes a chance. He may get rich and he may go to jail. On the other hand, all that Herbert gives is the impression that he knows what he's talking about; and he takes no chances. All he takes is money.

The Leveridges were thrilled when I took Herbert out to call on them. My, yes! He was Ralph De Palma, dropping in at a wayside country garage; Babe Ruth stopping to take part in a sand-lot ball-game; Chick Evans playing around with a couple of duffers on a municipal course; Bill Tilden performing on some small-town tennis-court; in short, the professional, the acknowledged master, condescending to advise and demonstrate for the admiring amateur.

They told him about Teddy's likes, and Herbert said:

"Ah, hah!"

They told him about Teddy's dislikes, and Herbert said:

"H-m!"

I don't know whether anybody else got anything out of that interview or not, but I'm sure I did. Since then, when I don't know what to say, I put on a profound expression, purse my lips, nod my head, and say, "Ah, hah!" or "H-m!" By the use of these two ejaculations, if you use the right inflections, you can get a reputation for a profound understanding of things you don't know anything about. Just look wise and say, "Ah, hah!" or "H-m!"

Of course I don't know anything about the child mind, but my inexpert judgment was that young Teddy didn't like Herbert. He made faces at him and called him a darned old fool. When Jack and Mary sent him from the room for this breach of courtesy, Teddy stopped at the door on his way out, and printed his calling-card on the back of Herbert's head in the shape of a lump raised by a small pebble from a well-handled sling-shot.

"Aggressive!" said Herbert reflectively, as he rubbed his head. "Bellicose! Surcharged with a vital energy that seeks its expression in conquest or destruction. Ah, hah! H-m!"

After dinner, Herbert added his personal observation to what he had been told of the little fiend, and gave us the answer.

"The boy has extraordinarily strong points," Herbert said. "I might say that he is possessed of mental and emotional qualities in a proportion that approximates genius."

The Leveridges believed him. They had known it all along, anyhow. Herbert just established his reputation as a master by telling them what they already knew to be true. I guess that's the secret of getting a reputation for great wisdom. Find out what the majority of the people believe, and then tell 'em it's true.

"Of course," Herbert went on, "like every other child with strong points, he has correlative weak ones."

That didn't go so good, especially with Mary. Jack tried to be a man of the world, so to speak, and take the blow calmly; but Mary's confidence in Herbert ceased to exist right there. He had said that her boy had weak points, and she knew better. In her estimation Herbert fell and fell and fell. Lucifer's storied nose-dive was a six-inch drop on to a feather-bed compared to Herbert's fall in Mary's estimation.

"His strong points are the combative instinct—the proclivity of the born leader—great vital energy, courage, and obstinacy," Herbert continued.

"Wouldn't you say tenacity rather than obstinacy?" Mary asked.

"Perhaps," Herbert admitted.

"He's really not what one could properly call obstinate," Mary explained. "He's just tenacious. That's it—tenacious."

Jack rubbed his chin and frowned.

"You spoke of his having certain weak points," he said. "Just what did you mean by that?"

"His main weak point is lack of application, of concentration on one thing," Herbert explained. "If he ever acquires the capacity for concentration on one thing, for deciding on what he wants and then sticking to it, applying himself to the one thing and that alone until he gets it, he is likely to develop into a really remarkable man. The danger is that he will waste his energy on a score of efforts without accomplishing any one of the many things that he attempts. He has a flair for adventure, and hates monotony so much that as soon as the initial enthusiasm for any line of play or work wears off, he is inclined to

drop it and take up some new thing that intrigues his fancy."

"Well!" said Mary. "You don't expect a mere child to devote himself to one thing, do you? And anyhow, I don't think his interest in so many things is a weakness. Not at all! I think it's a sign that he's going to be broad-minded; that he's going to have a deep understanding of a wide variety of things."

"Now, Mary," Jack said, "we mustn't be prejudiced about this thing just because Teddy happens to be our son. No human being is ever perfect, and he may have his faults, like other boys."

"Of course he has his faults," Mary said. "I wouldn't want him not to have any faults. He wouldn't be as lovable as he is if he didn't have them; but just because he has his faults, I don't see that it's necessary to sit by and hear him called obstinate and—and scatter-brained without saying a word in his defense!"

I thought perhaps the party was going to get rough and interesting; but Herbert explained, and then Mary explained, and Jack did the same, and the unpleasant situation passed off on a flood of expository words instead of exploding in a row.

"I'm not criticising the boy," Herbert finally summed up. "I just want to be of what help I can in making sure that he realizes on his abilities to the fullest extent."

"Of course," said Jack. "We understand. Now what must we do?"

"Give him an opportunity to develop concentration," Herbert advised.

"How?" Jack asked.

"By not interfering with him when he becomes engrossed in some interest. By encouraging him in that interest, no matter what it may be. It may be that it will seem to you that the matter in which he first becomes deeply concerned—whatever it may be—is of no advantage, or perhaps even detrimental to him; but the thing in itself is of little importance. The great thing is to let him ride the first hobby he develops, not for the hobby, but for the capacity for concentration that will enable him to make full use of his energies and ability when he ultimately decides on his life work."

"Suppose he takes an interest in eating worms," Mary said. "Should we encourage him in that?"

"Oh, well!" Herbert said. "Of course,

Mrs. Leveridge, you must use common sense."

"Yes," said Mary. "I think perhaps that would be the best way, after all."

As we drove away from the Leveridges' I asked Herbert what he really thought about the kid.

"All the wise, professional stuff aside," I said, "isn't he just an ordinary, ornery little hellion? And isn't a good limp slipper properly applied what he really needs for his development?"

"You're wrong," Herbert told me seriously. "He's really a remarkable boy, and with scientific management there's an excellent chance that he'll become an exceptionally forceful man."

"What he needs is a good licking," I insisted.

Herbert shook his head.

"You make the mistake common to so many people in their attitude toward a child," he argued. "You let the personal equation enter into your judgment. You are annoyed or offended by something the child does. You regard him in much the same light as you would a grown man. You expect him to conform to customs, observe courtesies, and all that sort of thing. That's rot. Every child is the beginning of an experiment, and in childhood, at least, he should be analyzed and understood with as impersonal a judgment as that of a chemist working with his acids or an electrician attempting the perfection of a new device. No element of personal relation should ever be permitted to be a part of one's estimate of a child. Have you a match?"

I didn't have one. Herbert searched himself for the second time, and finally felt in an outside pocket of his overcoat.

Then he screamed. There's no other word for it. It wasn't a yell; it was a *bona fide* scream. He rose up out of the seat and jumped out of the car. As he jumped, he wriggled out of his overcoat and threw it from him.

I stopped the car and ran back. He was standing in the road shaking and talking to himself.

"My God!" he was saying over and over again.

He was so scared that he couldn't tell me what it was all about; but I got an idea that it had something to do with the overcoat pocket. I got my flash-lamp and investigated.

There was a toad in the pocket. It was a large, live, moist toad. I fished it out and showed it to Herbert.

"Why," he said, "it's a toad!"

"Good guess!" I congratulated him. "The most learned naturalist couldn't have done better."

"Now how in Heaven's name did the thing get into my pocket?" he said.

"Not so good," I told him. "Right in your own line, too. I'm surprised. Of course, I have no scientific knowledge of the child mind, but—"

"That kid!" he exclaimed, and started to swear.

"Now, don't let the personal equation enter into your judgment, Herbert," I remonstrated with him. "Don't make the mistake of being annoyed or offended by something the child does."

"You're a fool!" said Herbert. "Lord! That thing felt just like a snake, and I have a peculiar horror of snakes."

"How do you suppose Teddy knew that?" I asked him. "There's a problem for a man who knows the child mind as you do."

Then Herbert told me what manner of fool I was. He went into detail. For a psychologist he was, for the moment, almost human. He swore lustily.

III

A FEW days later, Jack Leveridge came into my office in town. He was as worried as a man who has held out on his income-tax report.

"Teddy's developed a hobby," he told me. "I don't know what to do."

"Why not encourage him in it, as Herbert advised?" I asked.

"Mary objects," he said. "Teddy's hobby is to be a bandit. He's played at being a bandit for four days now. It's the first time he's ever stuck to any one thing that long."

I could have told Jack that Teddy's ambition to be a bandit was not really a new development. The little pest had been a bandit from the time he could make a noise loud enough to rob honest people of their sleep; but I didn't say so. I may not know anything about the child mind, but the mentality of the parent is an open book to me—open and blank. One must be tactful in dealing with a parent.

"I don't know what to do," Jack said. "Mary is all for discouraging him. She's

afraid that if we indulge him he'll grow up to be a train-robber."

"Doesn't she trust Herbert's judgment in the matter?" I asked.

"She does not," Jack said. "I've tried to convince her that he knows more about it than we do, but the argument always ends when she asks me if Herbert was ever the mother of a child like Teddy. That's not a debatable question, of course, and so there's no more to say. I'm worried about it. I want to do the right thing by Teddy. I wonder if your friend Herbert would mind advising me in this particular case?"

I called Herbert on the phone, and we had lunch with him.

"Encourage him to play bandit, by all means," Herbert insisted. "It won't do him a bit of harm, and it might be just the opportunity to develop concentration in him."

Jack told of Mary's opposition to the plan, and Herbert smiled tolerantly.

"Not unusual," he said. "As a matter of fact, mothers, of all people, are most inefficient in the training of a child. Mothers are ruled by maternal affection—an emotion. Of course an emotion is not, never can be, a fit substitute for scientific reasoning."

"You're right," Jack said firmly. "Science—that's the thing! Affection is all right in its place, but it's not scientific. I get you. Well, by George, my boy is going to be trained scientifically, whether his mother likes it or not. The way I look at it, I've got no right to let her affection for Teddy retard his proper development in any way. It's not only unfair to the boy; in the long run it's unfair to her as well."

There was a real row over the question in the Leveridge household, but Jack won. At least, he had his way. He bought Teddy toy pistols and rifles, read him stories about Jesse James, and encouraged him in every way to continue playing bandit.

Teddy continued. He snooped around by the hour with a toy pistol in one hand and a rifle in the other, pretending to hold up passers-by or shoot the neighbors. He dug himself a cave under the front porch, and hid in there until he caught a terrible cold from lying on the wet earth, and had to go to bed for a few days. While he was in bed, he played that he had been wounded in a desperate battle with a sheriff's posse and was convalescing from his injuries in the house of a tried friend.

"I'm letting Jack have his own way with the boy," Mary told me. "When he gets done with his fool experimenting he'll have made such a ninny of himself that he'll never dare to interfere about Teddy again!"

"Maybe the experiment will succeed," I suggested. "Of course, I think Herbert's a nut, and if I were twelve good men and true, I'd adjudge him as such; but plenty of intelligent people think he's a wizard. Maybe he is."

"Herbert Condon's a man," Mary said. "Do you know what I can do? I can take all any man knows about children and write it in long hand on the head of a small pin with a blunt lead pencil!"

IV

A FEW weeks after Teddy recovered from the cold he had caught hiding in his cave, there was a dance at the Chester Club. Jack and Mary Leveridge were there, and I took Herbert Condon out with me. Along in the beginning of the wee sma' hours, when the thing was beginning to break up, Jack Leveridge asked a crowd of us over to his place for a nightcap raid on his cellar.

We found the front door unlocked. Then we found the maid on the floor in the kitchen, tied and gagged. Then we did not find Teddy. The youth was gone, and so were all of Mary Leveridge's jewels and every other easily portable thing of value in the house.

The maid was of little value as a source of information. Life with her had become just one hysterical fit after another, in rapid succession.

The one intelligible and credible thing that she told us was that some men had entered the house, tied and gagged her, and made off with Teddy after ransacking the place. She estimated the number of intruders as anywhere from two to a thousand. She variously described them as tall and short, fat and thin, light and dark, dressed like gentlemen and looking like tramps. They had left several hours ago, and they had gone out by the back door just as we came in. Of course, she was of no more use to us than a pre-war map of the world.

We telephoned the police, and then we organized a searching-party.

If ever I commit a crime, I'll ask no boon of the devil except that he will ar-

range for a posse of amateur heroes to run me down. Of all the ways to get nothing done, that's the best. Some of the crowd got guns; others went forth into the night with their fists clenched. Some went afoot and some in automobiles. Some carried lanterns and called loudly for Teddy, and some tiptoed around in the dark to surprise the miscreants.

Ed Morrissey ran right into one of the criminals among the bushes behind the Mansfields' garage, next door to the Leveridges', and clinched with him. Morrissey yelled for help, but he didn't need it. When we got to him with the lanterns, he had his man beaten into unconsciousness. The only thing that kept Ed from being the hero of the evening was that fact that his victim proved to be Herbert Condon, instead of one of the crooks. Herbert had also been pussyfooting around in the dark, looking for excitement, and he and Ed had bumped into each other.

Herbert was pretty badly spoiled. His nose was broken, both eyes were blacked, his lips were cut, and some of his best teeth were scattered around here and there on the lawn. We carried him into the house, put him to bed, and left him to make a full night's work for the doctor we had called in to attend to the hysterical maid.

Soon after we got Herbert to bed, we heard a roar of shots from the crossroads a quarter of a mile from Jack's place. Jack and I jumped into my roadster and rushed down there. A hundred yards from the crossroads we met Jim Nicholson and two or three others coming our way on the dead run. They said they had located the robbers in a stalled automobile just around the corner on the State road, and had exchanged shots with them until their ammunition was gone.

While they were telling this tale, Baldy Mansfield hopped over the fence out of a field alongside of us and said he had the devils located. They were in a stalled car right down at the crossroads. He had been coming along the State road in his car with Elmer Lewis and Hal Frisch, and had surprised them. He and Elmer and Hal had shot at them for several minutes, and the bandits had returned the fire; but he thought they were all dead by now, because they weren't shooting any more. He had left Hal and Elmer still shooting at the robber car, and had cut across lots to get help.

When he and Jim Nicholson realized that they had shot up each other's cars, they got mad and started to fight. Jack and I drove away and left them in the road, pummeling each other in the dark.

The whole countryside was aroused by then, and was sending in misleading reports. Every automobile that passed on any road for miles around was reported by phone as containing the robbers and Teddy. Jack and I spent the rest of the night in my roadster, running down these false reports.

Just at dawn we were driving along a lonely side road, a couple of miles behind Jack's place, when we heard two shots and some yells. We placed the noise as coming from a deserted farmhouse a little way back from the road. We stopped the car and ran to investigate.

We heard another shot as we ran up the path toward the house, and some more yells. The front door was unlocked, and we pushed into the hall.

V

I HAD expected to encounter any one of a score of situations, but not the one we did find. In the open door of a large room off the hall stood young Teddy Leveridge, with a big automatic revolver in each hand. Standing against the opposite wall of the room, with their hands up and their eyes starting out of their heads until you could have hung hats on them, were two of the worst-scared men I have ever seen.

Teddy was calmly shooting at them. As we entered the hall, he squinted along the barrel of one of the guns and let drive. He didn't hit either of the men, but they couldn't have suffered more if his aim had been true. Both of them jumped in the air and screamed as the gun went off.

"Oh, papa, look!" he cried. "I got some sure 'nough guns with bullets that go off an' everything. Look!"

The little fiend took another shot at the two men by the wall before Jack could reach him.

"See?" he said, as his father grabbed him. "Didn't it go off good? I bet the bullets 'd hurt if they hit somebody! I almost hit those robber fellahs. I bet I'd 'a' hit 'em if they hadn't moved an' jumped around so much. I bet I could, if they'd kept still!"

Jack had taken the guns away from the kid, and was hugging him and making a

fuss over him. I covered the two men with my own revolver.

One of them slumped down on the floor, covered his face with his hand, and cried and moaned like a hysterical woman. The other man was shaking like a dry leaf in a gale of wind, but he kept his feet.

"We won't give you any trouble, mister," he said to me. "Do us just one favor—get us quick to a nice strong jail where kids aren't admitted!"

"What were you doing with this boy?" I asked him.

"That's a good line, pal," he said. "What were we doin' with him? You dunno how funny that is. My Gawd, if a guy run into a wild tiger, loose from some show or somep'n, you'd come along an' say: 'Hey, what are you doin' with that tiger?'"

"You kidnaped him," I said.

"Did we?" said the man. "Then listen to me. I never took a pledge in my life, but you just draw me up a paper promisin' never to kidnap nobody again, an' I'll sign it!"

"We've got the goods on you," I told him. "You robbed Leveridge's house and kidnaped his boy. Where's the stuff you took?"

"It's here," the man said, pointing to a sack in a corner of the room. "I ain't goin' to lie to you, pal. We're goin' to get a stretch up the river for this trick, an' all I hope is the judge gives me enough time to get my nerve settled before I have to go out again in the hard world where kids like this are runnin' loose. Listen, pal! This is the Gawd's truth. The play came up like this—me an' Andy here had a crib spotted down the road a piece, an' we're walkin' along, about eleven o'clock las' night, I think it was, when this kid here pops out o' some bushes alongside the sidewalk an' comes up to us.

"Are you robbers?" he asks us.

"We kind o' give him the laugh, and I says, 'Well, we might be at that. Are you one?'"

"Sure!" he says. 'I'm one!'

"Then he gives us this song an' dance—he says he's an orphan, an' was in an orphan asylum up till a couple o' weeks ago, when a guy an' his wife come an' adopted him. He claims he ain't got no use for these people that took him, an' he figures on makin' a getaway. He says the guy an' his wife is out to a dance, an' there's no-

body home but the maid. He says he sneaked out o' the house, an' he's got the key to the front door with him. He says he'll let us in, an' we can tie up the maid, grab the stuff, an' beat it before the guy an' his wife gets back. It listens kind o' real to us, 'cause we know about this dance that's on. We ask the kid a lot o' questions an' snoop around awhile. It looks good. The kid opens the door, we grab the maid an' tie her up. Then the kid shows us where all the stuff is; we grab it an' make a getaway.

"We think pretty well o' the kid. A clever youngster like that's worth a lot to guys like me an' Andy, an' they're hard to find. Him bein' an orphan, we figure we can train him along an' make good use of him. All the way comin' over here, the kid keeps sayin':

"We're sure 'nough robbers now, ain't we?"

"We told him we was, an' to shut up an' all that. Then we make this place an' den up for the night. The kid pops right off to sleep. Andy keeps watch for a while, while I sleep, an' then I take my turn. Andy rolled up his coat for a pillow an' laid his gat alongside him on the floor with the safety catch off, so's he could get into action quick. I laid my gun alongside o' me an' set here, just thinkin', an' I guess I must 'a' dozed off. The kid must 'a' woke up while we was both asleep. He woke us up—I'll say he did! When Andy an' me come to life, it was just daylight—only a few minutes ago, it was, though it seems years—an' that kid was standin' here in the door with our guns pointed at us, an' sayin':

"Hands up, or I'll shoot! Hands up, or I'll shoot!"

"We got up an' tried to talk him out of it.

"We're all good little pals together,' I says to him. 'Be a good guy an' put them guns down!'

"No!' he says. 'You're robbers, an' I'm going to shoot you. I'm not a robber any more; I'm tired playing robber. I'm goin' to play detective.'

"Then he started in shootin' at us. My Gawd! Then you come. We ain't goin' to make no trouble, pal. We'll go along with you quiet. All I ask is that you keep that kid off o' me. He's got my goat!"

Teddy pulled loose from his father's embrace and said:

"I was a detective, papa. I was a good one, too. I had sure 'nough guns an' sure 'nough robbers to shoot at an' everything. I'm hungry now. I want to go home!"

VI

WHEN we got the boy home, and Mary learned what had happened, she made a little speech. Her remarks were directed at Herbert Condon, who was able to sit up and hear, although he was temporarily unable to see or eat. She spoke also for Jack's benefit.

She spoke on the child mind, and dwelt at some length on the folly of men pretending to have any knowledge thereof. Herbert and Jack, she pointed out, were directly responsible for Teddy getting into the scrape. They were the ones who had insisted on encouraging him to play bandits. If they had had their way, the boy would have gone off with the robbers and become a criminal. Hadn't she told them that was what would happen? She answered her own question—in the affirmative.

If Teddy hadn't changed his mind, and decided to play detective, what might have happened? She didn't give any answer to that. She left it to our imaginations.

Would they let her alone now, and permit her to bring up her own child in her own way? She gave an answer to that all right. It was, "Yes!" No dissenting opinions were expressed. Neither Herbert nor Jack seemed to be in an argumentative mood.

"Of course, Mr. Condon, I feel no ill-will toward you," Mary concluded. "We shall expect you to stay on here until you have recovered."

There was a crash of glass as a brick came through the window. Teddy peered in through the broken pane.

"It slipped, mama," he explained. "I went to throw it at an ole cat that was sneakin' 'round here tryin' to steal some-p'n, an' it slipped."

"You must try to be more careful, dear," Mary admonished. "And it's not nice to throw things at poor dumb animals. Mama's dear little boy mustn't be cruel to animals!"

"It's good of you to offer to let me stay," Herbert said; "but I think I'll risk the trip into town. I've got to get up an article for the magazine section of the Sunday *Clarion* on 'How to Control the Boisterous Child.'"

Midnight*

A MYSTERY OF MATCHED WITS AND CROSSING TRAILS

By Octavus Roy Cohen

Author of "The Crimson Alibi," "Gray Dusk," etc.

ON a bitter winter night, with a sleet storm raging, Spike Walters, taxi-driver, picks up a fare at the Union Station—a well-dressed woman, who tells him to take her to 981 East End Avenue. Arriving there, the driver finds that his passenger has disappeared, and makes the still more surprising discovery that on the floor of his cab is the body of a man who has been shot to death. Walters reports to the police, and the dead man is identified as Rowland Warren, a prominent figure in local society.

The case is taken in hand by Eric Leverage, chief of police, and his friend, David Carroll, an amateur student of crime and its detection; but they find no clue to the mystery of Warren's death. A piece of negative information is volunteered by a talkative young girl, Evelyn Rogers, who calls on Carroll and tells him that she is anxious to help him. The newspapers having hinted that Hazel Graham, who was engaged to Warren, might have been guilty of the murder, Evelyn assures Carroll that this is impossible, as she passed the whole night with Miss Graham.

VI

FOR a long time after Evelyn departed, Carroll remained seated, puffing amusedly on the cigar which followed his matutinal cigarette. Time had been long since the detective had come in contact with so much youthful spontaneity, and he found the experience refreshing. Then he rose and would have left the apartment for headquarters, but again Freda announced a caller.

"Is it another young lady?" questioned Carroll.

"No, sir. It bane young feller."

"Show him in."

The visitor entered, and Carroll found himself gazing into the level eyes of a slightly disheveled and obviously excited young man of about twenty-eight years of age. The man was slight of stature, but every nervous gesture bespoke wiriness.

"Are you Mr. Carroll?"

"Yes."

"I'm Gresham—Garrison Gresham."

"A-a-ah! Won't you be seated?"

"Yes. I came to have a talk with you."

Carroll seated himself opposite his caller. Then he nodded.

"You came to see me?"

"About the Warren case."

"You know something about it?"

"Yes!" The young man seemed to bite the word. "I do."

"What?"

"You're in charge of the case, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"You've seen this morning's papers?"

"I have."

"Well, they're rotten—absolutely rotten. They don't say it in so many words, but the impression they create is that my sister, Hazel, was the woman in the taxi who killed Roland Warren. It's a damned lie!"

The young man was growing more excited. Carroll put out a restraining hand.

"I quite agree with you, my friend—it was a pretty rotten impression to create; but I shall see that all doubt is removed from the mind of the public when this afternoon's papers appear. I have just learned that your sister has an ironclad alibi."

"You have already learned that?"

"Yes."

Gresham leaned forward eagerly.

"What makes you sure—that she did not—was not—"

"Suppose I question you—if you have no objections."

* Copyright, 1921, by Octavus Roy Cohen—This story began in the July number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

"Fire away."

"Where was your sister at midnight last night?"

"At home."

"Alone? I mean was any one besides your family there?"

"Yes," replied Gresham, showing surprise at Carroll's evident knowledge of facts.

"Who?"

"Evelyn Rogers spent the night with her. Evelyn's a seventeen-year-old kid who has had what I believe you call a crush on my sister. They were together in that house from ten o'clock last night, or earlier, until this morning. And if you don't believe that—"

"But I do. I have just had a visit from Miss Rogers, and she told me exactly what you have just repeated; so I'm pretty well satisfied that your sister had nothing whatever to do with the affair. I will take pains to see that this evening's papers make that quite clear."

Gresham rose. A load seemed to have dropped from his shoulders.

"That's white of you, Carroll! I appreciate it."

"Not at all. I have no desire to cause annoyance or inconvenience where it is unnecessary. And Miss Rogers told me, with great attention to detail, just why and how it was impossible for your sister to have been anywhere except at home last night."

"Evelyn's considerable of a brick, in spite of the fact that she's more or less minus in the upper story. And now, if you're really satisfied, I'll be going."

The two men walked to the door together. They were about of a height; Carroll slightly the heavier of the two.

"You haven't any idea as to the identity of the woman in the taxicab, have you, Gresham?"

"No. Have you?"

"None whatever; though I fancy something ought to develop in the near future. The city is discussing it pretty freely?"

"The town's wild about it. They don't understand anything. It's tough on my sister. Hazel is only a kid, and I think she was in love with Warren. Well, good day, Carroll." He extended a firm hand. "Any time I can be of any help—"

"Thanks, Gresham."

"Five minutes after Gresham's departure, Carroll was in his car, headed for the police-station. He turned the case over

and over in a keen, analytic mind which had been refreshed by a night of untroubled sleep.

There were a good many features about it which puzzled him considerably. While he had not expected that the trail of the mysterious midnight woman would lead to the fiancée of the dead man, the sudden dissipation of that as a clue rather threw him off his balance. He had reached the end of a trail almost before setting foot upon it.

Thus far he had refused to allow himself to be worried by the strangest feature of the case—the appearance of the dead body in a taxicab which, according to its driver's story, could not have been other than empty. It was always easy to explain the disappearance of a person from an automobile; but, he figured, it was patently impossible to enter one without the driver's knowledge.

He reached headquarters and closeted himself with Leverage. They plunged at once into a discussion of that phase of the case.

"There are only two things which could have happened," said the chief of police slowly. "One is that some one croaked that bird Warren and shoved him into the cab while the woman was ridin' in it. The other is that he slipped into the cab and she killed him. While I ain't jumpin' on no set ideas, I have a hunch that the last one is right."

"Why?"

"Because the other—that idea of puttin' a dead body into a cab without the driver knowing it—it just naturally ain't possible."

"Then you are quite convinced, Leverage, that Walters did *not* know anything about it?"

"Now, say, Carroll, that's putting it up to me rather strong; but since you're asking, I'm here to say that I believe the kid. Of course it's possible that he was in on the deal—but I'm betting Liberty bonds against Russian rubles that he'd have slipped somewhere if that had been the case. Nobody that's in on a murder deal is going to frame a lie that sticks his bean as close to a noose as Walters's would be if he's not tellin' the truth!"

"Sounds reasonable; and yet—"

"I'm surprised at you suspectin' the kid."

"I don't suspect him."

"But you said—"

"We can't overlook anything—that's what I said. It's what I was driving at, anyway. So far, Walters is the only tangible clue we've had to work with. As I told you, the Hazel Gresham trail died a boring. The kid who came to see me this morning cleared her; and then her brother came along right afterward, red-hot over the insinuations against his sister in the papers. As matters stand now, there's nothing to tie to but Spike Walters."

"I'm glad you're handling it," said Leverage fervently. "And as you are, I'm making so bold as to ask what you're going to do next?"

"A little general inquiring. You can help me on that. For one thing, I want to get hold of every bit of dope I can regarding Warren—who he was, where he came from, what he did, the size of his bank deposits, his business connections, his social life, and especially every morsel of gossip that's ever been circulated about him in connection with women."

"H-m! You think this dame was a society sort?"

"Probably. He was undoubtedly going away with her; and a man of his stamp doesn't often elope with a woman of the other type."

"True enough! Well, I'll get you what dope I can."

"I want it all. I'm afraid this is going to revolve itself into a contest of elimination. The city is buzzing about the case to-day, and it ought to be pretty easy to get hold of a world of gossip concerning Warren's love-affairs—provided he had any. Everybody's concerned over the identity of that woman, and every woman Warren has ever been mixed up with, even in the most innocuous way, is going to be dragged into the case."

Carroll made his way from headquarters direct to the consolidated railroad ticket-office. He introduced himself to the chief clerk and stated his business. The other showed keen interest.

"The tickets were sold to him in this office, Mr. Carroll. This young man here sold them."

Carroll smiled genially at the skinny young chap who bustled forward importantly, proud of his temporary spot-light position.

"You sold some tickets to Roland Warren?"

"Yes, sir."

"When?"

"Day before yesterday."

"You are sure it was Mr. Warren?"

"Yes, sir. I have known him by sight for a long time."

"About the tickets—what did he buy?"

"Two tickets and a drawing-room on No. 29 for New York—due to leave at 11.55 last night."

"You're sure he bought *two* tickets and a drawing-room? Or was it one ticket?"

"It had to be two. We can't sell a drawing-room unless the purchaser has double transportation."

"You delivered both tickets to him personally?"

"Yes, sir—gave them both to him."

From the ticket-office Carroll went back to headquarters, and from there to the coroner's office, and, accompanied by that dignitary, to the undertaking establishment where the body was being kept under police guard. Nothing had yet been touched. The inquest had resulted in a verdict of "death by violence, inflicted by a revolver in the hands of a person unknown."

Carroll again ran through the man's pockets. In a vest pocket he discovered what he sought. He took the trunk-check to the Union Station, and through his police badge secured access to the baggage-room. The trunk was not there. He compared checks with the baggage-master, and learned that the trunk had duly gone to New York. He left orders for it to be returned to the city.

From there he went to the office of the division superintendent, and left a half-hour later, after an exchange of telegrams between the superintendent and the conductor of the train for New York, which informed him that the drawing-room engaged by Warren had been unoccupied, nor had there been an attempt on the part of any one to secure possession of it. Also that the only berth purchased on the train had been at a small-town stop about four o'clock in the morning.

Obviously, then, the person who was to share the drawing-room with Warren, and for whom the second ticket had been bought, had never boarded the train. The trail had doubled back again to the woman in the taxicab.

It was not until two o'clock in the afternoon that Carroll returned to headquarters. He found Leverage ready with his report.

"For one thing," said the chief, "there isn't a doubt that Warren was getting ready to leave town—and for good."

"How so?"

Leverage checked over his list.

"First, he had sublet his apartment. Second, he had with him eleven hundred dollars in cash. Third, he left his automobile with a dealer here to be sold, and did not place an order for any other car. And fourth—" Leverage paused impressively.

"Yes—and fourth?"

"He fired his valet yesterday!"

VII

THERE was a triumphant ring to Leverage's statement that the dead man's valet had been discharged at some time during the twenty-four hours which immediately preceded the killing. It was as if his instinct recognized a combination of circumstances which could not be ignored. Carroll looked up interestedly.

"Have you talked to this fellow?"

"No. I figured I'd better leave that phase of it to you; but I'm having him watched. Cartwright is on the job. Right now the man is at his boarding-place on Larson Street."

Carroll started for the door.

"Let's go," he suggested laconically.

It was but a few minutes' drive from headquarters to the boarding-house of Roland Warren's former valet. Carroll parked his car at the curb and inspected the place closely from the outside.

There was little architectural beauty to recommend the house. It was a rambling, dilapidated, two-story structure, sadly in need of paint and repairs, and bespeaking occupation by a family none too well blessed with the better things of existence. They proceeded to the door and rang the bell. A slatternly woman answered their summons, and Leverage addressed her:

"We wish to see William Barker, please."

"William Barker?"

"Yes. I believe he moved to this house yesterday."

"Oh, that feller!" The woman started inside. "Wait a minute," she said crossly, and shut the door in their faces.

While they stood waiting, Leverage glanced keenly up and down the street, and his eye lighted on the muscular figure of Cartwright, the plain-clothes man, shivering in the partial shelter of an alley across

the way. The policeman signaled them that all was well, and resumed his vigil. At that minute the door opened and the woman reappeared.

"He ain't home!" said she, and promptly closed the door again.

Carroll looked at Leverage and Leverage looked at Carroll. Leverage crossed the street and interrogated Cartwright.

"The landlady says he's out, Cartwright. How about it?"

"Bum steer, chief! The bird's there—I'll bet my silk shirt on it!"

Leverage recrossed the street and reported to Carroll.

"You're pretty sure Cartwright has the straight dope?"

"Sure thing," said the chief. "He's one of the most reliable men on the force, and when he says a thing, he knows it."

Carroll stroked his beardless chin. There was a hard, calculating light in his eyes—eyes which alternated between a soft, friendly blue and a steely gray. Finally he looked up at Leverage.

"What's your idea, Eric?"

"About him sendin' word he was out when we know he ain't?"

"Exactly."

"It looks darn funny to me, Carroll! 'Pears like he didn't want to discuss the affair with us."

"He don't know who we are."

"He can guess pretty well. Any guy with a head on his shoulders knows the valet of a murdered man is going to be quizzed by the police."

"Good! Come on."

Carroll put a firm hand on the knob and turned it. Then he stepped into the dingy reception hall, followed by the city's chief of police.

At the sound of visitors, the angular frame of the boarding-house keeper appeared in the doorway, her eyes flashing antagonistically. Leverage turned back the lapel of his coat and disclosed the police badge.

"Listen here, lady," he said in a voice whose very softness brooked no opposition; "that bird Barker is here, and we're going to see him. Police business! Where's his room?"

The woman's face grew ashen.

"What's he been doin'?" she quavered.

"What's he been up to now?"

"What's he been up to before this?" countered Leverage.

"I don't know anything about him. Swear to Gawd I don't! He just come here yesterday an' took a room. Paid cash in advance."

"He's in his room, ain't he?"

"What if he is? He told me to tell anybody who come along that he was out. I didn't know you was cops. Oh, I hope there ain't nothin' goin' to ruin the reputation of this place! There ain't a woman in town who runs a decenter place than this."

"Nobody's going to know anything," reassured Carroll, "provided you keep your own tongue between your teeth. Now take us to Barker's room."

The boarding-house keeper led the way up a flight of dark and twisting stairs, along a musty hall. She paused before a door at the far end.

"There it is, sirs—and—"

"You go down-stairs," whispered Carroll. "If we should find you trying to listen at the keyhole—"

His manner made it unnecessary to finish the threat. The woman departed, fluttering with excitement. Leverage's hand found the knob, and Carroll nodded briefly. The door was flung open, and the two men entered.

"What the—"

The occupant of the room leaped to his feet and stood staring, his face gone pasty white, his demeanor one of terror, which Carroll could see he was fighting to control. Leverage closed the door gently and gazed at the man upon whom they had called.

William Barker was not a large man; neither was he small. He was one of those men of medium height, whose physique deceives every one save the anatomical expert. To the casual observer his weight would have been catalogued at about a hundred and forty. At a glance Carroll knew that it was nearer a hundred and eighty. Normal breadth of shoulder was more than made up for by unusual depth of chest. Ready-made trousers bulged with the enormous muscular development of calf and thigh. The face, clean-shaven, was sullen with the fear inspired by the sudden entrance of Carroll and Leverage; and there was more than a hint of evil in it. As they watched, the sullenness of expression was supplanted by a leer, and then by a mask of professional placidity—the bovine expression which one expects to

find in the average specimen of masculine hired help.

The man's demeanor was a combination of abjectness and hostility. He was plainly frightened, yet striving to appear at ease.

Carroll and Leverage maintained silence. Barker fidgeted nervously, and finally, when the strain became too great, burst out with:

"Who are you fellers? Whatcha want?"

Carroll spoke softly.

"William Barker?"

"What if that is my name?"

Carroll's hands spread wide.

"Just wanted to be sure, that's all. You are William Barker?"

"An' what if I am? What you got to do with that?"

Carroll showed his badge.

"And this gentleman," he finished, designating Leverage, "is the chief of police."

Barker's voice came back to him in a half-whine, half-snarl.

"I ain't done nothin'—"

"Nobody has accused you yet."

"Well, when you bust in on a feller like this—"

Carroll seated himself, and Leverage followed suit. He motioned Barker to a chair.

"Let's talk things over," he suggested mildly.

"Ain't nothin' to talk over."

"You're William Barker, aren't you?"

"I ain't said I ain't, have I?"

Carroll's eyes grew a bit harder. His voice cracked out:

"What's your name?"

Barker met his gaze; then the eyes of the ex-valet shifted.

"William Barker," he answered almost unintelligibly.

"Very good! Now, sit down, William."

William seated himself with ill grace. Carroll spoke again, but this time the softness had returned to his tones. His manner approached downright friendliness.

"We came here to talk with you, Barker," he said frankly. "We don't know a thing about your connection with this case; but we do know that you were valet to Roland Warren, and therefore must possess a great deal of information about him which no one else could possibly have. All we want is to learn what you know about this tragedy—what you know and what you think."

Barker raised his head. For a long time he stared silently at Carroll.

"I don't know who you are," he remarked at length; "but you seem to be on the level."

"I am on the level," returned Carroll quietly. "My name is David Carroll—"

"O-o-oh! So *you're* David Carroll?" The query was a sincere tribute.

"Yes, I'm Carroll, and I'm working on the Warren case. I don't want to cause trouble for any one, but there are certain facts which I must learn. You can tell me some of them. No person who is innocent has the slightest thing to fear from me. And so—Barker—if you have nothing to conceal, I'd advise that you talk frankly."

"I ain't got nothin' to conceal. What made you think I had?"

"I don't think so. I don't think anything definite at this stage of the game. I want to find out what you know."

"I don't know nothin', either."

"H-m! Suppose I learn that for myself! I'll start at the beginning. Your name is William Barker?"

"Yes. I told you that once."

"Where is your home? What city have you lived in mostly?"

The man hesitated.

"I was born in Gadsden, Alabama, if that's what you mean. Mostly I've lived in New York and around there."

"What cities around there?"

"Newark."

"Newark, New Jersey?"

"Yes. An' in Jersey City some, and Paterson, and a little while in Brooklyn."

"You met Mr. Warren where?"

"In New York. I was valet for a feller named Duckworth, and he went and died on me—typhoid; you c'n find out all about him if you want. Mr. Warren was a friend of Mr. Duckworth's, an' he offered me a job. We lived in New York for a while and then we come down here."

"How long ago?"

"Bout four years—maybe five."

"What kind of a man was Mr. Warren—personally?"

Carroll watched his man closely without appearing to do so. He saw Barker flush slightly, and did not miss the jerky nervousness of his answer—that or the forced enthusiasm.

"Oh, I reckon he was all right. That is, he *was* all right. Real nice feller."

"You were fond of him?"

"I didn't say I was in love with him. I said he was a nice feller."

"Treated you well?"

"Oh, sure—he treated me fine."

"And yet he discharged you yesterday."

Then Carroll bluffed. "Without notice!"

Barker looked up sharply. His face betrayed his surprise; showed clearly that Carroll's guess had scored.

"How'd you know that?"

"I knew it," returned Carroll. "That's sufficient."

Barker assumed a defensive attitude.

"Anyway," said he, "that didn't make me sore at him, because he give me a month's pay; and that's just as good as a notice, ain't it?"

"Ye-e-es, I guess it is." Carroll hesitated. "Did he pay you in cash?"

"Yeh—cash."

Again Carroll hesitated for a moment, while he lighted a cigarette. When he spoke again, his tone was merely conversational, almost casual.

"You've read the papers—all about Mr. Warren's murder, haven't you?"

"I'll say I have."

"What do you think about it?"

Again that startled look in Barker's eyes. Again the nervous twitching of hands.

"Whatcha mean, what do I think about it?"

"The woman in the taxicab—do you think she killed him?"

Barker drew a deep breath. One might have fancied that it was a sigh of relief.

"Oh, *her*? Sure! She's the person that killed him!"

"He knew a good many women?" suggested Carroll interrogatively. "He got along pretty well with them?"

"H-m!" William Barker nodded. "You said it then, Mr. Carroll. Mr. Warren—he was a bird with the women!"

VIII

No slightest move of Warren's erstwhile valet—no twitching of facial muscles, no involuntary gesture of nervousness, however slight—escaped Carroll's attention; but with all his watchfulness, the boyish-looking investigator was unostentatious, almost retiring in his manner.

And this modest demeanor was having its effect on William Barker, just as Carroll had known it would have, and as Leverage had hoped. Eric Leverage had worked with Carroll before, and he had seen the man's personal charm, his sunny smile, his attitude of camaraderie, perform

miracles. People had a way of talking freely to Carroll after he had chatted with them awhile, no matter how bitter the hostility surrounding their first meeting. Carroll was that way—he was a student of practical, every-day psychology. He worked to one end—he endeavored to learn the mental reaction of every one of his *dramatis personae* toward the fact of the crime he happened to be investigating; that and, as nearly as possible, their feelings at the moment of the commission of the crime, no matter where they might have been.

"It doesn't matter what a suspect says," he had told Leverage once. "Some of them tell the truth and some of them lie. Often the truth sounds untrue, while the lies carry all the earmarks of honesty. It's a sheer guess on the part of any detective. What I want to know is how my man felt at the time the crime was committed—not where he was; and how he feels now about the whole thing."

"But the facts themselves are important," argued the practical chief of police.

"Granted! But when you have facts, you don't need a detective. I'd rather have a suspect talk freely and never tell the truth than have him be reticent and stick to a true story."

Leverage's reply had been expressive of his opinion of Carroll's almost uncanny ability.

"Sounds like damned nonsense," said he; "but it's never failed you yet. And even you couldn't get away with it if you lost that smile of yours!"

Right now he was witnessing the magic of Carroll's smile. He had seen the antagonism slowly melt from Barker's manner. The nervousness was still there, true; but it seemed tinged with an attitude which was part friendliness toward Carroll and part contempt for his powers. That, too, was an old story to Leverage. More than one criminal had tripped over the snag of underrating Carroll's ability.

Barker's last statement—"Warren, he was a bird with the women!"—was true. Leverage knew it was true. Carroll knew it was true. There was the ring of truth about it. It mattered not whether Barker had an iron of his own in the fire—it mattered not what else he said which was not true—the two detectives knew that they had extracted from him a fact, the relative importance of which would be established later.

Just at present, knowledge that the dead man had been somewhat of a philanderer seemed of considerable importance. For one thing, it established the theory that he had been planning an elopement with the woman in the taxicab. That being the case, a definite task was faced—first, find the woman; then find some man vitally affected by her elopement with Warren.

Carroll betrayed no particular interest in Barker's statement. Instead, he smiled genially, a sort of between-us-men smile, which did much to disarm Barker.

"A regular devil with 'em, eh, Barker?"

"You spoke a mouthful that time, Mr. Carroll! What he didn't know about women their own husbands couldn't tell him."

"Married ones?"

"Oh, sure! He was a specialist with them."

"Then most of this gossip we've been hearing has a basis of fact?"

A momentary return of caution showed in Barker's retort.

"I don't know just what you've been hearin'."

"A good many stories about his love-affairs—with women who were prominent socially."

Barker shrugged.

"Most likely they're true; although it's a safe bet that a heap of 'em was lies. Menfolks have a way of lyin' about women that way, even where they'll tell the truth about everything else. They've got women beaten ninety-seven ways gossiping about that sort of thing."

"You know a thing or two yourself, Barker?"

The man flushed with pleasure.

"Oh, I ain't nobody's pet jackass, when it comes to that!"

"Now you"—Carroll's tone was gentle, almost hypnotic—"of course you know who the woman is that Mr. Warren was planning to elope with?"

"I know—"

Suddenly Barker paused, and his face went white. He compressed his lips with an effort and choked back the words. Leverage, leaning forward in tense eagerness—knowing the verbal trap that Carroll had been planting—sighed with disappointment, and relaxed.

"Say, what the hell are you driving at?"

"Nothing." One would have sworn that Carroll was surprised at Barker's flare of anger—or else that it had passed unno-

ticed. "I just figured that you, having been his valet, and knowing a good deal about him, would have knowledge of this."

"He wasn't in the habit of discussin' his lady friends with me," growled the ex-valet surlily.

"Of course he wasn't; but you know, of course? You guessed?"

"No, I didn't do nothin' of the kind. Say, what are you tryin' to do—trip me up or somethin'?"

"Of course not. Why should I be interested in tripping you up?"

"You was sayin'—"

"Don't be foolish, Barker! It wouldn't do me a bit of good to—er—trip you up. All I want is whatever knowledge you have which may prove of interest in solving this case."

The man's eyes narrowed craftily.

"You ain't got no suspicions yourself, have you?"

"Suspensions of what?"

"Who that dame in the taxicab was."

Carroll laughed infectiously.

"Goodness, no! If I had, I wouldn't be seated here chatting with you."

Again the expression of relief flashed across Barker's face—a bit of play lost by neither detective. Carroll was toying idly with a gold pencil on the end of his walde-mar. His outward calmness exasperated Leverage. From this point of the interview, the chief of police would have dropped the attitude of trustful friendliness and resorted to a little practical third-degree stuff. He was fairly quivering with eagerness to bluster about the room and extract information by main force.

And a hint of Leverage's mental seethe must have been communicated to Carroll, for the younger man turned the battery of his sunny gaze upon the chief of police and nodded reassuringly. The effect was instantaneous. Leverage's temporary resentment departed much as the gas escapes from a pin-punctured balloon. He gave ear to Barker's speech.

"N'r you ain't the only one who don't know who that woman was. I don't!"

"You knew he was planning to elope, though?"

The man shook his head doggedly.

"I knew he was leavin' the city for good, if that's what you mean."

"No-o, not exactly. I knew that much myself. What interests me is this—was he planning to leave with some woman?"

Barker hesitated before replying, and when he did answer it was patent that his words were chosen carefully.

"I don't hardly reckon he was, Mr. Carroll. Mind you, I'm not sayin' he wasn't; but then again I ain't sayin' he was. I can't do nothin' only guess—same as you can."

"I see!" Carroll was apparently unconscious of Barker's flagrant evasion. "What I don't understand is this—when Mr. Warren was publicly engaged to Miss Gresham, why did he try to elope with her?"

"Elope with Miss Gresham?" Barker paused; then a slow, calculating smile creased his lips. "Miss Gresham—her he was engaged to! Dog-gone if I don't believe you've hit the nail on the head, Mr. Carroll!"

"What nail?"

"About her bein' the woman in the taxi. You know some fellers is like that—they'd a heap rather elope with a woman they're crazy about than stand up in a church and get married. They're sort of romantic." Barker was waxing loquacious. "You know, you must be right. Fact, if you put it right up to me, I'd say there wasn't no doubt that Miss Gresham was the woman in the taxicab."

"I had that idea," responded Carroll slowly. "But what I can't understand, Barker, and what you might help me figure out, is this—why should Miss Gresham kill Mr. Warren?"

"Huh! Ask me somethin' easy, will you? I never was good at riddles."

Leverage marveled at the change in the two men. Apparently Carroll had swallowed hook, line, and sinker. Of course, Leverage was pretty sure that he had not; but he was also sure that Barker thought he had. And Barker was volunteering information—plenty of it—that was absolutely valueless. For the first time he was forcing the conversational pace, and Carroll seemed serenely content to drag limply along.

"Reckon she might have been jealous of him?" drawled Carroll.

"Jealous? Maybe. I ain't sayin' she wasn't. Of course, she must have heard a good many things about him and other women; and when a woman gets downright jealous there ain't much sayin' what she wouldn't do. Not that I'm sayin' Miss Gresham croaked him. I ain't sayin' noth-

in' positive; but if you're askin' me who he'd most naturally elope with, why, I'd say it was the girl he was engaged to marry. If he wasn't going to marry her, what did he ever get engaged to her for?"

Carroll nodded.

"Certainly sounds reasonable." He paused, and then: "Where were you about midnight last night?"

"I was"—Barker's figure stiffened defensively, and his eyebrows drew down over the deep-set eyes—"I was just shootin' some pool."

"Shooting pool?"

"Uh-huh!"

"Where?"

"At Kelly's place."

"Where is that?"

The man hesitated, flushed, and then, somewhat sullenly:

"On Cypress Street."

"That's pretty close to the Union Station, isn't it?"

"Not so close."

"About how far away?"

Again the momentary hesitation.

"Bout a half-block."

"And you were shooting pool there?"

"Sure I was! I c'n prove it."

Carroll grinned disengagingly.

"You don't need to prove anything to me, Barker. And for goodness' sake get the idea out of your head that I'm suspecting you of anything. I had to talk matters over with you. You knew more about the dead man than any one else; but I couldn't think you had anything to do with it, could I? You're not a woman!"

Barker grinned sheepishly.

"That's all right, Mr. Carroll. And as for me bein' a woman—well, you're sure a woman killed him, ain't you?"

"As sure as any one can be. And now"—Carroll rose—"I'm tremendously obliged for all the information you've given me. Any time you run across anything more that you think might prove of interest, look me up, will you?"

"Sure! Sure!" Barker's tone was almost hearty. "You're a regular feller, Mr. Carroll—a regular feller!"

The two detectives departed. Carroll spoke to Cartwright as he passed:

"Keep both eyes on that fellow Barker," he ordered curtly. "I'll send Reed up to team with you. Don't let him get away. Nab him if he tries it."

Cartwright nodded briefly, and Carroll

and Leverage climbed into the former's car. As they rounded the corner, Leverage turned wide eyes upon his professional associate.

"Carroll?"

"Yes?"

"You beat the Dutch!"

"How so?"

"You didn't swallow that bird's yarn, did you?"

"Of course not," answered Carroll calmly.

"I didn't think so; but you had me worried, with that innocent look of yours. Me, if I was wantin' to play safe on this case, I'd arrest William Barker *pronto*."

"Why?"

"Because," snapped Leverage positively, "I think he was mixed up in Warren's murder!"

"Aa-ah!" Carroll refused to become excited. "You do?"

"Yes, I do. What do you think?"

"I think this," answered Carroll. "I think that Mr. William Barker knows a great deal more about the case than he has told!"

IX

THEY drove in silence to headquarters, each man busy with his thoughts. It was not until they were alone in Leverage's sanctum that the subject of the recent interview was again broached. It was Leverage who brought it up, in his characteristically gruff way.

"I reckon you're wonderin', Carroll, about what I said back yonder in the car?"

"About arresting Barker?"

"Yes. I guess you're figuring what I'd arrest him for, eh?"

"I'm interested—yes."

"I'd arrest him for this." Leverage leaned forward earnestly, his attitude that of a man eager to convince. "Let's admit right off the reel that the skirt in the taxicab croaked Warren. Looks like she did, anyway; but whether she did or not, it's an even bet that there was a man mixed up in it somewhere. And if that man isn't Mr. William Barker, then I'll eat a month's pay."

"You're sure there was a man mixed up somewhere?"

"Certainly. This murder deal was planned in advance. It must have been. Things couldn't just work out that way. And no woman, no matter how much she

wanted to bump Warren off, could think of a thing that complicated. Even if she did think of it, she wouldn't have the nerve to carry it out that way. Ain't I right?"

"You may not be right, Leverage; but you're certainly logical."

"Good! Now, so far, we ain't got any man in this case except Barker."

Carroll shook his head.

"You're wrong there."

"How?"

"Somewhere in this town is some man who is interested in the woman with whom Warren was planning to elope. Don't forget this, Leverage—I let Barker ramble on. I like to hear 'em talk. The minute he jumped at the idea that the woman in the taxi was Miss Gresham, I knew perfectly well that he knew she was not. I also believe that he knows who the woman was. Further, I believe that she is socially prominent. That being the case, it is a safe guess that there is some man who might commit a murder, provided he knew in advance of the elopement. Our task now is to discover that woman and, through her, the man interested."

Leverage frowned thoughtfully.

"Listens good," he volunteered at length.

"Another thing—Barker admits he was shooting pool in Kelly's place last night around midnight; and Kelly's place is only half a block from the Union Station. That sounds significant!"

"It does; and then again it may mean nothing. What I am striving for is to make William Barker feel that he is safe. The safer he feels, the more readily he will talk. No matter how many lies he tells, everything that he says is of value. He didn't know, of course, that we already had a perfect alibi for Miss Gresham; but even if we hadn't, his assumed belief that she committed the crime would have assured me that she did not. No-o, I think we'd better not arrest the man unless he forces our hand—tries to jump town, or something like that. Better let him remain at large and talk frequently. If he has anything to betray, there's more chance that he'll do it that way. Don't you think I'm right?"

"I wouldn't admit it if I didn't, Carroll. I've seen you in action too often to believe you're ever wrong."

Carroll flushed boyishly.

"Don't be absurd, Leverage! I'm often wrong—very wrong. And don't think that

I'm a transcendent detective; they don't really exist, you know. I'm merely trying to be human, to learn the nature of the people with whom I'm dealing. I try to learn 'em as well as they know themselves—maybe a little better; and then I try to separate the wheat of vital facts from the chaff of the inconsequential."

"Just the same," insisted Leverage loyally, "you always get 'em!"

"And when I do, it is because I have used nothing more than plain common sense. Don't think that I attach no importance to physical clues. They're immensely valuable; but the one weakness in a criminal is his lack of common sense. His prospective is awry, his sense of values distorted. Usually he bothers his head about a myriad of minor details, and pays but scant attention to the genuinely important things. It is upon that weakness that I am banking—particularly so in the case of Barker."

"I insist that you're a wonder, Carroll!"

"And I insist that you're foolishly complimentary. Did you ever stop to realize, Eric, that when a crime is committed the advantage lies entirely with the detective? The detective can make a thousand mistakes during the course of his investigations and still trap his man; but the criminal cannot make one single error—not one!"

"Maybe so, David; but it takes a good man to recognize that one, and to know what to do with it."

Carroll grinned and left, and then for two days devoted himself to a study of the conditions surrounding the murder—that and routine matters. The trunk, for instance, was duly returned by the railroad from New York, and Carroll and his friend made a minute investigation of every article contained therein. Their search was well-nigh fruitless. The trunk contained little save the wardrobe of a well-dressed man—suits, shirts, underwear, shoes, caps. There were also golf and tennis togs; a few books; a handsome leather secretary, containing a good many personal letters and one or two business missives which were of little interest. Altogether the examination of the trunk—a process which occupied three hours—established nothing definite, save that there was nothing to be discovered. Its results were hopelessly negative.

Meanwhile the city sizzled with gossip of the Warren murder. The well-nigh im-

penetrable mystery surrounding the case, its many sensational features, the admission of the police department that the woman in the case was not Hazel Gresham, fiancée of the dead man, yet the certainty that there was a woman, and that she was of the better class—all this served to keep the tongues of men and women alike wagging at both ends.

Carroll was besieged with anonymous letters. Dozens of prominent married women were mentioned as having been, at one time or another, the object of Warren's amorous attentions. Carroll read each one carefully and filed it away. He had hoped for this, but the results had far exceeded his expectations, and he found himself bewildered rather than assisted by the response from nameless individuals who were morbidly eager to be of help.

The detective knew that the running down of each individual trail—the investigation of each of Warren's supposed affairs of the heart—would be an interminable procedure. And so far not a single one of the letters had varied from another. They connected Warren's name with that of some married woman, and let it go at that. It was quite evident that the dead man had been very much of a Lothario; too much so for the mental ease of the investigator who was struggling to link the cause of his death with one particular affair.

The reporters allowed their imaginations to run wild. The story was what is known, in the parlance of the newspaper world, as a "space-eater." City editors turned their best men loose on it and devoted columns to conjecture. There was little definite information upon which to base the daily stories that were luridly hurled into type. Thus far Spike Walters, driver of taxicab No. 92,381, was the only person under arrest, and only those persons too lazy to exercise their minds were willing to believe that Spike was guilty or that he knew more of the crime than he had told.

Carroll read each news story attentively. No wild theory of a pop-eyed reporter, hungry for fact, was too absurd to receive his careful attention. But they proved of little assistance. With the spot-light of publicity blazing on the crime, the investigation seemed to have become static. There was no forward movement; nothing save that in the brain of David Carroll salient facts were being seized upon and catalogued for future reference.

Cartwright and Reed, the plain-clothes men detailed to shadow William Barker, reported nothing suspicious in that gentleman's movements. He seemed to be making no effort to secure employment, but, on the other hand, there was little of interest in what he did do. Again the stone wall of negative action.

Barker spent his mornings in his boarding-house, apparently luxuriating in long slumbers; he ate always at the same cheap restaurant; and his afternoons and evenings were devoted largely to the science of eight-ball pool at Kelly's place. There may have been significance in his loyalty to Kelly's place; but if there was, it was too vague for Carroll to consider. He merely remembered the fact that Barker was a steady patron of the pool-room near the Union Station, and filed it away with his other threads of information concerning the murder.

Carroll was frankly puzzled. The case differed widely from any other with which he had ever come in contact. Usually there was an array of persons upon whom suspicion could be justly thrown; a collection of suspects from whom the investigator could take his choice, or from whom he could extract facts which eventually might be used to corner the guilty person. In the present case there was no one to whom he could turn an accusing finger.

Of course, he was convinced that William Barker knew a great deal about the crime and the events which preceded it; but Barker wouldn't talk—and he, Carroll, had no evidence that enabled him to bluff, to draw Barker out against his will.

The crime seemed to have lost itself in the sleety cold of the December midnight upon which it was committed. The trails were not blind—there were simply no trails. The circumstances baffled explanation—a lone woman entering an empty taxicab; a run to a distant point in the city; the discovery of the woman's disappearance, and in her stead the sight of the dead body of a prominent society man—that, and the further blind information that the suit-case which the woman had carried was the property of the man whose body was huddled horribly in the taxicab.

The woman, whoever she was, had either been unusually clever or unusually lucky. Minute examination of the interior of the cab had revealed nothing—not a fingerprint, nor a scrap of handkerchief. There

was absolutely nothing which could serve as a clue in establishing her identity.

And yet, somewhere in the city—a city of two hundred thousand souls—was the woman who could clear up the mystery.

Convinced that she was prominent socially, Carroll kept a close eye upon the departures of society women for other cities. His vigil had been unrewarded thus far. And the public as a whole waited eagerly for her apprehension, for the public was unanimous in the belief that the woman in the taxicab was the person who had ended Warren's life.

The very fact of having nothing definite upon which to work was getting on Carroll's usually equable nerves. He had little to say to Leverage regarding the case, for the simple reason that there was very little which could be said. Leverage, on his part, watched the detective with keen interest, sympathizing with him, and exhibiting implicit confidence; but the men didn't agree upon the correct procedure. Leverage was all for arresting Barker and charging him with the murder.

"You'll learn some facts then, Carroll," he insisted.

But Carroll shook his head.

"It wouldn't get us anywhere, Eric. We couldn't prove him guilty."

"No-o, but that don't make no difference. Of course the law says a man is innocent until you prove he ain't, but that ain't what the law does. If we arrest this here Mr. William Barker, everybody's going to believe he's guilty until he proves himself innocent."

"And you think he can't do that?"

"No! At least I'm gambling on this—Barker can't prove himself innocent without telling who is guilty!"

But Carroll refused to arrest the man. He knew that Leverage disapproved, but he also knew that Leverage was sportsman enough to let him handle the case in his own way.

On one of his long strolls through the down-town section of the city—daily walks which helped him to think connectedly—David Carroll felt a hand on his arm and heard an eager feminine voice in his ear:

"Gracious goodness! If it isn't the perfectly marvelous Mr. David Carroll!"

Carroll bowed instinctively. Then his lips expanded into the first wholesome smile he had experienced in forty-eight hours.

"Miss Evelyn Rogers!"

"You did recognize me, didn't you? How simply splendid! I'm awfully glad we met!"

"So am I, Miss Rogers."

She dropped her voice confidentially.

"Will you do me a *great* favor—an *enormous* favor?"

"Certainly. What is it?"

"It's this." She looked around carefully. "I told some of my friends that you are a friend of mine, and they don't believe it. They're over yonder in that ice-cream place. Now, what I want you to do for me is to show 'em. I want you take me over there and buy me an ice-cream soda!"

Carroll laughed aloud as he took her by the arm and piloted her through the traffic. He asked only one question:

"What flavor?"

X

If Evelyn Rogers, amply clad as to fur around the neck but somewhat underdressed as to net stockings about the legs, had desired to create a sensation among her friends, she more than succeeded. She preceded Carroll into the place, her eyes glowing proudly, skirted the table at which her friends sat, then stopped abruptly, forcing Carroll to do likewise.

"Mr. Carroll," she said sweetly, "I want to introduce you to my friends." She called them by name. "Girls, this is Mr. Carroll, the famous detective!"

Carroll bowed in his most courtly manner, and assured them that he was delighted to make their acquaintance. He insisted that it was always a pleasure to meet any friends of his very dear friend, Miss Rogers. The girls at the table giggled with embarrassment, and one or two of them made rather pallid attempts at repartee. Then Carroll and the seventeen-year-old found a table in the very center of the floor, even as a boy, recognizing Carroll, appeared at their elbow.

The detective studied the list intently. Apparently there was no subject in the world more vital at that moment than the selection of just the proper concoction. Finally he looked up and shook his head.

"I can't decide," he announced gravely. "They all sound so good! Walnut banana sundae; strawberry glory; peach Melba; chocolate parfait, with whipped cream and cracked walnuts; elegantine fizz— Help me out, please."

She, too, plunged into the labyrinth of toothsome titles. Finally she emerged smiling.

"Have you ever tasted a chocolate fudge sundae?"

"No-o, I'm afraid not."

"Well, it's just the *elegantest* thing—vanilla ice-cream with hot fudge poured over it, and as soon as they pour the fudge—it's steaming hot, you know—simply scalding—it forms into a sort of candy, and then when they serve it—"

"I fancy you want one, too, don't you?"

"Oh, goodness me, yes! I *always* eat chocolate fudge sundaes. They're simply scrumptious—but they do take the edge off one's dinner appetite. Personally, I don't care so very much. I believe we eat too much anyway, don't you, Mr. Carroll? I read in a book once that after you reach a certain point in eating—that is, after you've swallowed just the right number of calories—the rest don't do you a single particle of good. And besides, ice-cream is healthy, and certainly there's nothing with more nourishment in it than chocolate—unless it is raisins. I like raisins well enough—"

Carroll turned to the boy.

"Two chocolate fudge sundaes," he ordered; "and put a few raisins on one of them."

He found the large eyes of the girl turned upon him adoringly.

"Do you know," she said, "that when I said the other day that you were the most wonderful, the most marvelous man in the world, I didn't even know half how wonderful or marvelous you really were?"

"Thanks! And pray what caused the discovery?"

"The way you acted just now. Why, I'm sure those girls think that you've known me all your life—or that we're engaged, or something!"

Carroll was a trifle startled.

"Engaged?"

"Why not? You don't *look* like an old man."

The detective chuckled.

"Nor do I feel like one when I'm with you. You're deliciously refreshing."

"And you are—are—simply exquisite! Do you know, when I'm with you, I feel inspired to great deeds—to noble—er—attainments."

"Really?"

"Uh-huh! Honest to goodness. And

did I really help you by what I told you the other day?"

"You certainly did, Miss Rogers. There isn't a doubt of it."

She lowered her voice and leaned confidentially across the table.

"Will you tell me something?"

"Surely?"

"Who really killed Mr. Warren?"

"Eh?"

"Who really did kill him?"

"Why, I'm sure I don't know. I'm trying to find out."

"Oh, pshaw! You can't pull the wool over *my* eyes! You couldn't have been working on the case this long and not have discovered the—the—malefactor."

"But that's exactly what I have done. Also it's why I rather hoped that you might have a little more information for me."

"Me? Information for you? How wonderful! As if you'd be interested in anything I might know! Although I'm not an absolute fool. Gerald says I am, of course—he's my brother-in-law—but then Gerald isn't anything but an old crab, anyway. Hateful thing! But *you* don't think I am, do you?"

"No, indeed. Ah, here we are!"

The chocolate fudge sundaes were served, and for a few moments they gave themselves over to the task of enjoying them. It was Evelyn who spoke first.

"What do you want me to tell you?"

"Almost anything. For instance—you knew Roland Warren pretty well, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! I've known him forever and ever. He was an awfully nice boy, and crazy about me—simply wild! That is, he was before he died."

"H-m! And you saw a good deal of him?"

"Oceans! He used to call at the house all the time. It *was* funny, too. Gerald used to think he was the one Roland was coming to see, and Naomi—she's my sister—used to think that he was coming to see her; and all the time I knew that I was the person he was calling on. It's funny, isn't it, how old folks will get those queer ideas?"

"Your sister is so very old?"

"Terribly. She was thirty on her last birthday!"

"Horrors! She *is* ancient, isn't she?"

"Awfully! Although Naomi isn't so bad-looking—"

"Your sister couldn't be."

"Aw, quit kidding! But she isn't bad-looking, really. Lord knows she deserves a better husband than she drew. Honestly, when the divine providence was handing out shrubbery, they planted a lemon-tree in his yard just before he was born."

"Probably your sister doesn't agree with your opinion."

"Oh, yes, she does! Of course, she doesn't talk to me about it, but I know she ain't wild about Gerald. How could she be? He's old enough to be her father—forty-two, if he's a minute. Don't think of anything but business and making money. And he's *terribly* jealous!"

"A very complimentary picture you draw of him."

"If I wrote what I thought about him, I could be arrested for sending it through the mails. Goodness knows, no husband at all is a hundred per cent better than a man like that. Not that he beats Naomi. Fact is, I'd think he was more human if he did. Only time I ever like him is when he flies up in a rage. He swears simply *elegantly*!"

"Indeed?"

"I love it. And I don't think it's wicked to love swearing, do you? I was reading in a book once something about swearing being a perfectly natural mental reaction, or something—like a safety-valve on a steam-engine. If the engine didn't have the safety-valve, it would blow up. So if it's true that swearing is like that, then there can't be any harm in it; because anything that keeps a person from blowing up must be pretty good, don't you think?"

"It does sound reasonable."

"Not that I swear myself—not out loud, anyway, but sometimes, when I'm right peeved at Gerald or Naomi or somebody, I get in my room and say swear-words right out loud. And I feel ever so much better for it!"

The conversation languished while she again attacked the sundae. Carroll spoke:

"Have you seen your friend, Miss Gresham, lately?"

"Hazel? I'll say I have—although she's horribly weepy since poor Roland was killed. Of course, I'm not heartless or anything like that; but what's the use of crying all the time when there are just as good fish in the sea as ever were caught? I told her that, but it don't seem to do a single bit of good. She just keeps saying, 'Poor Roland is dead,' just as if I didn't know it

as well as she does—him having been crazy about me even before he was about her. I'm sort of afraid it's gone to the poor girl's head. She's simply *horribly* upset!"

"That's not unnatural, is it?"

"No-o, I suppose not; but it's terribly old-fashioned."

"Does she—discuss the affair much?"

"All the time."

"What does she think about the woman in the taxicab?"

"You mean the woman who killed him?"

"Yes."

"Well!" positively. "If I was that woman, I'd hate to meet Hazel Gresham—if Hazel knew it!"

"But she has no suspicion of any certain person?"

"Goodness, no! How could she have? Of course, we agreed that it was some vampire; but we can't decide which one. Most of the women we know don't go in for killing men; and a heap of them are married, anyway."

"Anyway?"

"Yes. You wouldn't expect a nice chap like Roland to be eloping with a *married* woman, would you? Not in real life?"

Carroll with difficulty concealed a smile. The girl was a refreshing mixture of world-old wisdom and almost childish innocence. She was a type new to him, and, as such, absorbingly interesting.

"How about Miss Gresham's brother?" he inquired idly. "How does he take it?"

"Oh, Garry seems all upset, too; but then the more I talk to people, the more I think I'm the only level-headed one in the world. I haven't got a bit excited over it, have I?"

"Not a bit. And now"—Carroll rose and reached for the check—"suppose we go?"

"Where?" she asked naively.

The opening was too obvious.

"Where do you usually go with young gentlemen who meet you down-town in the afternoons?"

"Picture show," she answered frankly.

"Wouldn't you just *adore* to see that picture at the Trianon to-day? They say it's *stupendous*!"

"Perhaps."

They walked up the street together. On the way they passed Eric Leverage. That gentleman bowed heavily and stood aside in surprise, while an exclamation, rather profane, issued from his lips. David Car-

roll and a seventeen-year-old girl headed for a picture show! The thing was unbelievable. Leverage shook his head sadly and passed on as Carroll and Evelyn disappeared behind the din of an orchestra.

The picture proved not at all bad, although Evelyn excited adverse comment from spectators unfortunate enough to be sitting within range of her constant chatter. Apparently there was no stopping her. She talked and talked and talked.

The picture ended eventually, and they left the theater. Night had descended upon the city, and the busy thoroughfare was studded with thousands of lights, which glared coldly through the December chill. Principally because he did not know what else to do, Carroll requested permission to take her home in his car. She accepted with rather disarming alacrity.

Carroll had about run out of conversation, and his ears were tired by the incessant din of the girl's talk. He followed her directions mechanically, and eventually they rounded a corner in the heart of the city's best residential district. Evelyn designated a white house which stood back in a large yard.

"That's it," said she. "You'd better turn, so you can park against the curb."

Carroll slowed down and swung around. He was tired of the loquacious girl, and anxious to be rid of her; but as he swung his car across the street on the turn, something happened which instantly riveted his attention.

The door of Evelyn's home opened. A man and woman stood framed in the doorway. Then the door closed, and the man descended the steps, moved down the walk to the street, and strode swiftly away. For perhaps three seconds he had been held clearly in the glare of Carroll's head-lights.

When the detective spoke, it was with an effort to control his tone, to make his question casual.

"Did you see that man, Miss Rogers?"

"Yes."

"Do you know him?"

"Goodness me, no! He's been here before, though."

Carroll stopped his car at the curb. He assisted Evelyn to the ground. Then he made a strange request.

"I wonder, Miss Rogers, whether you'd allow me to call on you some evening?"

Evelyn's eyes popped open with the marvel of it.

"You mean *you* want to come and call on *me*? Some *evening*?"

"If you will allow me."

"Allow *you*? Why, David Carroll—I think you're simply—simply—*grandiloquent*! When will you come?"

"If your sister will permit—"

"Bother sis! To-morrow night?"

"Yes, to-morrow night."

She executed a few exuberant dance steps.

"Oh, what 'll the girls say when I tell 'em?"

Carroll climbed thoughtfully back into his car. He saw Evelyn enter the house, but his thoughts were not with her. He was thinking of the man who had just left.

Carroll never forgot faces, and he had recognized the visitor.

The man was William Barker, former valet to Roland Warren!

XI

CARROLL'S forehead was seamed with thought as he turned his car townward and sent it hurtling through the frosty air. He drove mechanically, scarcely knowing what he was doing.

He was frankly puzzled, enormously surprised, and not a little startled. The afternoon had been at first amusing, then interesting, then utterly boring. Evelyn Rogers's incessant chatter had put him in a state of mental coma—a lethargy from which he had been rudely aroused at sight of William Barker leaving the residence of Evelyn's sister.

There was something of sinister significance in what he had seen. Not for a moment did he entertain the idea that Barker had been seeking employment. That possibility was negated by the disinterested young girl's statement that Barker had been there before, and by the fact that Barker was leaving from the front door instead of through the servant's entrance.

And now that Carroll had stumbled upon something tangible—something definite—certain salient facts which had come to him through the haze of girlish chatter began to stand out and assume their proper significance.

For instance, there was her constant repetition of the fact that Roland Warren had been a frequent visitor at the Lawrence home. That might mean nothing at all; it might mean a great deal. Certainly it was indicative of a close friendship be-

tween the dead man and the members of that household.

He paid little heed to the girl's protestations that Warren had been in "love with her. No expert in the ways of the rising generation, Carroll yet knew that no man of Warren's maturity had unleashed his affections on a girl who yet lacked several years of womanhood. The dead man had been too much of an epicure in femininity for such folly as that.

But Carroll knew that in that house there was another woman—Naomi Lawrence, Evelyn's sister. And while Evelyn had dismissed the sister with a few words, he remembered that the girl had described her as being "not so bad-looking," and had also said that Mrs. Lawrence fancied that when Warren called at the house, he was calling on her.

There was also the matter of Gerald Lawrence to be considered. Evelyn insisted that Gerald was an "old crab," and of an exceedingly jealous disposition. If that were true, then his jealousy, coupled with a possible intimacy between Mrs. Lawrence and Warren, might have been ample motive for the taxicab tragedy.

It was all rather puzzling. Carroll's mind leaped nimbly from one mental trail to another. He held himself in check, afraid that his deductions were proceeding too swiftly. He was acutely conscious of the danger of jumping too precipitately after this single tangible clue which had come to him after four days of fruitless search. There was danger, and he knew it, of attaching untoward importance to a combination of circumstances which under other conditions might not have excited him in the slightest degree.

It was there that the case bewildered him—and he was not slow in confessing his bewilderment. Up to this moment there had been an appalling dearth of physical clues—of things upon which a line of investigation could be intelligently based. And Carroll knew, now that something had turned up, that he must watch himself lest this first piece of possible evidence should assume unreasonable and unwarranted proportions.

The somber outline of police headquarters bulked in the night. Carroll swung down the alley, shut off his motor, and entered. He found Leverage in his office, and settled at once to a discussion of developments; but when he would have spoken, the

chief cut him off. Leverage had news, was frankly proud of the fact that he had news.

"Just got an interesting report from Cartwright," he announced.

"Regarding Barker?"

Carroll hitched his chair forward eagerly.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Yesterday afternoon at five o'clock William Barker went to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Lawrence. He was in the house eighteen minutes."

"Why wasn't this told me last night?"

"Cartwright didn't think anything of it. He included it in his report, which was turned in to me this morning."

"Why did he think it was unimportant?"

"Said he thought Barker was probably looking for a job."

"And he doesn't think so now?"

"No-o. That is, he thinks circumstances make an investigation worth while. You see, just a few minutes ago Barker went to the Lawrence home again. This time he was there four minutes."

"Does Cartwright know who was at home at that time?"

"He thinks so. He says a maid let Barker in, and apparently Mrs. Lawrence let him out. A young girl, whom Cartwright believes to be Mrs. Lawrence's sister, drove up just as Barker was leaving. She was in the car with some man, but he didn't get out. Then, just a minute ago, Gerald Lawrence reached home. So the idea is that Mrs. Lawrence was alone with the servants when Barker called."

"And yet he only remained in the house four minutes?"

"That's what Cartwright phoned." Leverage paused. "What do you make of it, Carroll?"

"Offhand," answered the youthful-appearing detective, "I should say that Barker had called to see Mr. Lawrence."

"Why?"

"We'll suppose Lawrence was at home on the occasion of Barker's first visit. Do you know whether he was?"

"No. I asked, but Cartwright doesn't know. Couldn't stay, you know—because he was under orders to follow Barker. Tonight he sent Reed after Barker and he watched the Lawrence house."

"Good! If it is so that Lawrence was at home when Barker called yesterday evening, and Barker then remained eighteen

minutes, whereas this afternoon, when we know that no one but Mrs. Lawrence was there, he remained only four minutes, it is fairly reasonable to suppose that he was calling to see Mr. Lawrence."

"I think you're right, Carroll."

"I'm not at all convinced about that; but if we're proceeding along lines of pure logic, that is the answer."

"How about the man who drove up with the kid sister?"

Carroll smiled.

"I'm sure he had nothing whatever to do with the murder."

"Good Lord! I didn't think he had; but still he may have been a friend, and—"

"That man was all right. I know that."

"You know?" Leverage was evidently incredulous.

"Yes." Carroll grinned. "I was the man!"

"You? Holy sufferin' mackerel! Sa-a-ay! Was that chicken I seen you with down-town Lawrence's sister-in-law?"

"Yes—Miss Evelyn Rogers. And good Lord, Leverage, how that girl can talk! She holds all records for conversational distance and speed. She talked me deaf and dumb."

Leverage was staring at Carroll with an expression of respect.

"If you were the man who was with her, David, you must have seen Barker when he left the house."

"I did."

The face of the chief of police showed his disappointment.

"That's what I get for thinking I had a real surprise up my sleeve! You sit back with that innocent kid face of yours and let me spill all the dope, and then tell me in a perfectly matter-of-fact way that you knew it all the time. How'd you ever get wise to the thing, anyway?"

Carroll was honest.

"No thanks to my sagacity, Leverage. It was one of those pieces of bull luck which I have always contended play an enormous part in solving crime. In the first place, Evelyn Rogers came to me the day after Warren was killed to assure me that Miss Gresham had a perfect alibi. This afternoon she lassoed me and dragged me into an ice-cream place, because she wanted to prove to some of her school companions that we were really friends." Carroll chuckled. "I quaffed freely from the fountain of youth, and enjoyed it for a

while. Then I got bored stiff, and took her to the movies. She invited me, and I only did it because I've passed beyond the years of adolescence and didn't know how to crawlfish out of it. After which—because it seemed the proper thing to do—I volunteered to take her home in my car; and it was then that I saw William Barker leaving the Lawrence house. So you see, Leverage, my knowledge is the result of pure accident, and not at all the fruit of keen perception."

"Well, anyway, Carroll, you knew! And that takes the edge off what I told you."

"Not at all," returned Carroll seriously.

"For while what I discovered may be valuable, it is much more valuable when combined with the fact that Barker has been there once before, and that on his first visit, when Lawrence was probably at home, he stayed nearly five times as long as he did when we know that Lawrence was not there."

"What do you think of it?"

Carroll hesitated.

"I don't know what to think, Eric. I'm afraid I'm thinking about it more than I have any right. We've been so long without anything to work on that we're liable to let this bit of information throw us off our balance. But of course we'll look into it more deeply."

"How?"

Again Carroll chuckled.

"Our little friend, Miss Rogers, is suffering from a severe case of hero-worship. I'm it! And so, when I saw Barker leaving her home, I immediately made an engagement to call upon her to-morrow night!"

"You call on that kid!" Suddenly Leverage lay back in his swivel chair and gave vent to a peal of raucous laughter. He banged his fist on the arm of the chair. "Oh, boy! That's the snappiest yet! David Carroll paying a social call on a seventeen-year-old kid! Ain't that simply the richest—"

Carroll made a wry face.

"Needn't rub it in, Eric. It's bad enough anyway. And"—growing serious—"I'm hoping to meet Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence. They ought to prove interesting."

Leverage could not tear himself away from the sheer humor of the situation.

"What the devil you and her going to talk about? Fox-trot steps? Is the camel walk vulgar? Frat dance? Next week's

basket-ball game? Sa-a-ay, David, I'd give my chances of heaven to be hidden behind the door!"

"So would I," said Carroll wryly.

"Above all things," counseled Leverage with mock severity, "don't you go making love to her."

Carroll stretched a muscular hand across the table. His sinewy fingers closed around a glass paperweight. He held this poised steadily.

"One more crack out of you, Eric, and I'll slam this against your head. You're a pretty good chief of police, but you're a rotten humorist!"

"Just the same," grinned the chief, "I can see that this joke is on you! And now what?"

"For one thing"—Carroll's manner was all business again—"I want every bit of

dope I can get on Gerald Lawrence and his wife. I know that Warren was very intimate at the house—friendly with both wife and husband, according to what Miss Rogers says. That connects them up. What I want to find out now is where both of 'em were the night Warren was killed. Put a couple of your best men out to gather this dope—there isn't any of it too small to interest me. Meanwhile, I'll pump the kid. I have a hunch that this isn't going to be a cold trail!"

"It had better not be, or Mr. David Carroll is going to find himself with one unsolved case on his hands. Yes, sir! If this is a blind lead, we're up against it for fair!"

"It isn't going to be entirely blind," postulated Carroll. "Barker assures us of that!"

(To be continued in the September number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

THE CHIPMUNK

LITTLE chipmunk, do you know
All you mean to me?
She and I, and long ago,
And you there in the tree—
With that nut between your paws,
Half-way to your twittering jaws;
Jaunty with your velvet coat,
Puffing out your furry throat;
Eyes like some big polished seed,
Plumed tail curved like half a lyre.

We pretended not to heed;
You seemed minded to inquire,
"Can I trust them?" Then a jerk,
And you'd skipped three branches higher,
Jaws again at work;
Like a little clockwork elf,
With all the forest to itself.

She was very fair to see,
She was all the world to me;
She has gone whole worlds away;
Yet it seems as if to-day,
Chipmunk, I could hear her say:
"Get that chipmunk, dear, for me!"

Chipmunk, you can never know
All she was to me;
That's all—it was long ago!

Hilton Holmes

What Profiteth It?

THE STORY OF A CRISIS IN THE LIFE OF A JUST JUDGE

By David R. Solomon

THE clerk of the Supreme Court came back to earth. Starting, he looked around, then shamefacedly began delving in the files before him. The door of the court-room was open. Even yet there hung the spell of that last impassioned appeal.

"H-m!" muttered the clerk, seeking to divert attention from his habitual yielding to the spell of forensic oratory. "H-m! Heavy criminal docket, Jerry. Here's the record in the Zhizhuzza case."

"Which is that?" demanded Jerry absently, scratching his ear with a penholder. "Oh, that's right, I do remember. Sentenced to hang, wasn't he?"

"Uhuh. What is he, Jerry—some sort of wop, or something?"

"Dunno. Wonder what the Supreme Court is doing with the lower court's conviction and sentence to hang?"

"Depends, Jerry, on who they select to write the opinion. They'll all read the record, if they haven't already; but Lord help that there Zhizhuzza if the chief justice renders the court's opinion!"

"That ain't no lie, either. That's the hardest-boiled bird I ever saw, that chief justice. I'll bet he hasn't had a real human thought in the last five years. His insides must be some sort of a machine, all cogs and pinions. Has he always been that way?"

"No, Jerry, he hasn't. Judge Grant told me once—and you know the chief justice and Jim Grant grew up together—that Judge Anderson got that way after his wife died and his only child ran away and married a man he didn't approve of. Judge Grant says father and daughter are just alike—they pass each other on the street now without speaking."

"Well," quoth Jerry sagely, "this Zhizhuzza bird better start his prayers to Bud-

dha, or whatever his god is named, that the chief justice don't get the case!"

II

THE chief justice had already started down the corridor of the Capitol.

"John!" called Judge Grant. "Going to walk down?"

"Hadn't thought of it, Jim," the chief justice replied, turning.

"Wait. I'll walk with you."

They passed down the long corridors of the Capitol, nodding, now and then, to a friend or acquaintance. Nine times out of ten, however, it was Judge Grant who did the speaking. The chief justice turned toward a passing car.

Judge Grant detained him.

"John, don't take the car. It's such a pretty morning. Walk down the avenue with me."

"Anything special, Jim?"

"Yes—and no. There's that Zhizhuzza case. I wanted to talk it over. Remember it, don't you?"

"Couldn't help it if I wanted to do otherwise. Who could forget that name? Rotten mess, too, Jim!"

"I was afraid of that."

"Of what?"

"That you'd think that way about it. It's one of the reasons I wanted to talk with you this morning, John."

"I don't understand."

"You've read the record, John?"

"Yes."

"Offhand, what do you think of it?"

"Come on, Jim! Let's not work out of chambers. Let's talk of something else."

"In just a moment, John. What of the case?"

"Little or nothing to it. No error. We'll have to affirm the sentence of the lower court."

"That means Zhizhuzza must hang, John."

"I know. His hard luck—that's all."

"Do you think that poor ignorant devil merits the death penalty, John?"

"Are you asking John Anderson, chief justice of the Supreme Court, or John Anderson, plain man?"

"Both, John. You should be both."

"No! As a plain, ordinary citizen, I can base my judgments and decisions upon common rumor, upon my inquiries, upon hearsay of the rankest sort. As chief justice, Jim, I can know only what is in the record of the trial which the lower court certifies up to me."

"Well, then, Jim, what is in the Zhizhuzza record?"

"Enough, I am sorry to say, to mean death for Alandro Zhizhuzza. From it, belief is forced upon us that he took his knife and slit the throat of a boarder in his house. The slitting was premeditated, and of Zhizhuzza's malice aforethought. Ergo, Zhizhuzza must hang. What more?"

"Is that all that you found in that record, John?"

"The law says that is enough."

"But much more is in there, John."

"Wherein is it material to the case?"

"To begin with, this man Zhizhuzza is a foreigner."

"True enough, Jim; but, harsh as the doctrine may seem, the law says that even foreigners may not commit murder with impunity."

"Easy, John, easy! Take your time! I'm reviewing the contents of the record. Zhizhuzza can speak only a word or two of English. The very trial was conducted through an interpreter."

"Granted, Jim; but that was entirely legal. The statute expressly provides for that."

"Give me time, John, give me time! Zhizhuzza was all alone, in a strange land, without family, without friends. The court appointed a lawyer to represent him at his trial for his life—Dan Fielding's boy, a good lad, but only last June graduated from law school. You know what happened when Featherstone, knowing that he must shortly run for reelection, began to prosecute."

"As your friend, Jim, I know all that. As chief justice, I can know only what has been certified up to us within the four corners of the pages of the record. The law

takes no account of the incompetence or inexperience of the accused's counsel."

"But, John, all of that is actually in there; perhaps informally, but just as certainly in there. I can put my finger on every fact I have mentioned."

"Perhaps so, Jim, but those are just the trimmings. They do not at all touch upon the question of the affirmation or reversal of the lower court's judgment."

"Give me time, John; I will come to all that. Let me first finish the circumstances of the poor devil's case. Understand me, I make no claim that he was of exalted station. The evidence shows that he was a common day laborer, of the lowest grade, in the steel-mills. But somewhere, John, there is something about 'even as ye do unto the meanest of these—'"

The chief justice opened his mouth suddenly, then seemed to change his mind. Judge Grant ignored the manifestation.

"All of that, John, every single fact, is written into the record so that he who runs may read; but there is much more in that record, John—much more."

The face of the chief justice was a study. Silently he was waiting.

"John, look here a moment. Can you truthfully tell me that you do not know where this man, on trial for his life, found his wife when he came home from the steel-mills? Answer me. Don't you *know*?"

"Wait a minute, Jim. Get back to my question to you. Are you asking John Anderson, chief justice of the Supreme Court, or John Anderson, private citizen? The official, under his oath of office, knows only, can know only, what the lower court has sent up to him, under its seal, as containing the full and complete record of the fair and impartial trial of Alandro Zhizhuzza. John Anderson, private citizen, knows much more; and as a man—as a man, mind you, not as the official, sworn to administer the law—does not blame him."

"You don't know how glad it makes me to hear you say that, John. Wouldn't any man"—there was a gleam of warmth in Judge Grant's voice as he stole a glance across at his friend—"wouldn't any man have done the same thing?"

"Very probably, Jim. Nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand certainly would have."

"Is it a crime, then, John"—very quietly—"to do what any man would have done?"

"No, Jim, I think not; but—"

"Wait just a second! And what does the law hold when an injured husband catches his wife and her paramour *in flagrante delicto*?"

"That's elementary criminal law, Jim. If he kills under the stress of the discovery, the crime is only manslaughter, and cannot be murder in the first degree."

"Yet you would affirm a judgment of the lower court, John, on those very facts, finding this poor fellow guilty of murder in the first degree, and sentencing him to be hanged?"

"No, Jim—no, not at all. You forget the point that I have made all the way through. If those facts were properly presented to us as the Supreme Court, our sworn duty would demand that we send the case back for a new trial, that we reverse the judgment of the lower court. But you forget, Jim, you have constantly been forgetting, that those facts are not in the record; that if we do reverse this case it will be not because of our duty, but in spite of it, upon knowledge that came to us in forbidden ways."

"I was afraid you felt that way about it, John. It's one of the reasons why I wanted to have this talk with you. You know, and I know, John, what will happen in conference if you vote for affirmance. In reality, you are the Supreme Court. Bailey follows your lead blindly. So does Cosford; so, indeed, do all the rest of them. We both know, John—there is no use in disguising the fact—that if you vote for affirmance, Zhizhuzza's sentence to hang will be affirmed with only myself dissenting. The man's life rests in your hands, John!"

"I'm sorry. I wish it were otherwise; but it is one of the things some man must do. It is one of the things we know we must do some day, knew we would have to do fearlessly, unswervingly, when we held up our hands and swore to administer the law, before God, as we saw it. What recourse is left to us?"

"A plain recourse, John. It is for your sake, for your own sake, John, that I am saying this—not for the poor devil's, whose fate we so calmly are deciding. Somewhere, again, John, there is a question: 'What profiteth it a man—?' You know how it goes. It is you that I am pleading for, John. Be more—as you phrased it—than the chief justice. Be a man!"

Judge Grant's voice was low, but there was in it a note of intensity that few had ever heard.

"As a lawyer, John," he went on, "there is not your peer at the bar of this State. Your clear, cold mind bites through a legal question. But you are a machine, John. You lack flesh and blood. You work solely in dry legal principles. You never open the windows of your soul to the sunshine of humanity. Human beings, their hopes, their fears, their loves, their hates, their petty little selfishnesses, are all lost to you. Mix in a little humanity!"

The chief justice's face had frozen into stern lines.

"Our long friendship gives you license to say these things to me," he said very quietly; "but wherein does it—does any of it—pertain to the case we have been discussing?"

"It is because of our lifelong friendship that I am saying them." Judge Grant's voice, too, had become very quiet. "There is a lack, John, not in the Zhizhuzza record, but in you. Every one of those facts, which you yourself have declared would reduce the degree of the crime, are in those pages—unmistakably, plainly, in letters of fire. They shine through every word and line of it. Read those pages as a man, John—as a husband. The inevitable conclusion is there; it cannot be escaped. Read, John, as a human being, and you must see that it is our duty to send the case back for another trial. That is why I sought you out this morning. You are at the turning of the ways, John Anderson; and it is your soul that is hanging in the balance. What can you gain that will profit you for the loss of it?"

For a perceptible moment the chief justice was silent. When he answered it was casually, in an apparently unconcerned tone.

"Think so, Jim? Well, here's where I turn toward home. Will it satisfy you if I promise to read the entire record over again this evening?"

"Don't read it this evening, John. Wait! Don't leave quite yet. I've something else I wanted to say to you. First, though, will you promise not to read the record over again till morning?"

"Surely. But why?"

"John, your—Nell and her husband are coming over to see you to-night."

Like the jaws of a steel trap the chief

justice's teeth had closed. His eyes narrowed; his chin set. His whole expression suddenly changed—hardened implacably.

"Wait a minute before you say what you're preparing to, John. I know Nell married against your will—against your express command. I know all that you've gone through. But she's your daughter, John—flesh of your flesh, blood of your blood. She is all on earth that you can call kin. She looks like your wife, John—and the baby looks like you."

The pleading note should have melted stone. The chief justice, however, unchangingly looked across the street.

"She's hot-tempered, too, John, and as unbending as you yourself are. She's too much like you. You'll never know how I have labored and worked and pleaded with her to get her to come to see you this time. If you don't receive her in the spirit she comes, John—if you don't welcome her with open arms—she won't come back to you—ever."

Judge Grant's voice trailed off into silence. There was no sound save the busy chirping of a sparrow in the street. Without answering, without a word or sign to show that he had heard, the chief justice turned toward his home.

"You see now, John, why I insisted on speaking of the Zhizhuzza case, and of Nell, together. Remember, after all, you are on trial—not they, but you."

The chief justice moved on his way without hurrying, without slowing. To all appearances, he had not heard.

"At any rate, John, you promised to read again the Zhizhuzza record. You gave me your word."

Implacably, unswervingly, the chief justice held his course.

III

ONCE more the clerk of the Supreme Court came back to earth. Starting, he looked around, then shamefacedly began delving in the files before him. Through the open door of the court-room there even yet rang the echoes from the last impassioned appeal.

"H-m!" muttered the clerk, again seeking to divert attention from his habitual yielding to the temptations of forensic oratory. "Well, Jerry, here's the record in the Zhizhuzza case. All ready to be sent back to the lower court. H-m! Chief justice wrote the opinion. Poor Zhizhuzza! Poor devil!"

"Affirmed, huh?" inquired Jerry absently, scratching his ear with a penholder. "When they going to hang him?"

There was no answer. Jerry looked around.

The clerk was bending over, turning pages, his eyes staring. Jerry took one look, then hurried over.

The clerk turned another page, stared, then pointed with a tense, trembling forefinger.

"Read that, Jerry! Just read that!"

Jerry read the typed lines.

All the justices concur. Reversed and remanded for new trial.

"Well, I'll be darned!" quoth Jerry. "Still, I ain't so much surprised. I knew the old boy was losing his grip when I saw him this morning, in the park, with a baby in his lap!"

CONTENTMENT

AND what more could I ask of happiness
 Than that which falls so clearly to my lot—
 The little garden in the hills, the press
 Of homely duties round my humble cot,
 Where all the years we know not fear nor stress,
 The world shut out, its strife long since forgot?

How better could I know content than this—
 The pale, far stars, the sun's ecstatic flare,
 The silent, mystic nights, a fleeting kiss,
 A friend or two our simple crust to share,
 A thrush at twilight, and the swift, keen bliss
 Of knowing that your arms are waiting there?

Floyd Meredith

A to Z

THROWING LIGHT UPON THE QUESTION WHETHER WOMEN ARE INTERESTED IN BUSINESS

By Elmer Brown Mason

TOM ADAMS rose to his feet and crossed the office to the filing-room. Outside the door he paused at the sound of voices.

"It's not a question of friendship, Ger-tie, an' I haven't one little thing against you. I'm responsible for the files, though, an' there's nobody getting off this afternoon, not so's you could notice it."

"The chief clerk says it's all right with him, if it is with you," came in tones of injured protest. "Lemme have to-day off, Alice! I just gotta get a new dress, an' you know I've a date for all Sat'day afternoon."

"There isn't a thing doing, deary, not a thing." The answer was firm. "You save the price of that new dress an' go on filing M's. It'll take you all day to catch up."

"Give some people a little a'thority, an' they think they're Mary Garden!" replied an angry voice. "I guess there's just as good jobs waiting for me as this one, any time I like to take 'em. Put that on your lip-stick an' rub it in, Alice Hubbell!"

"Don't blight your prospects by staying here," a crisp voice said calmly; "but if you *don't* plan to make a change right away, I'd like to have those M's finished."

Tom Adams chuckled at the staccato *tap-tap-tap* of departing heels, then knocked on the door, albeit timidly. He was not entirely at his ease with girls, least of all with the capable filing clerk. He answered the abrupt "Come in!" by opening the door.

"Have you any dope on a Harold Warren, Miss Hubbell?" he asked. "I—I think he's a policy hound. That is, he's got a bug for ordering policies he doesn't intend to pay for."

The girl went to a filing-case marked "Wa to We" and pulled out a folder.

"J. Harold Warren or just Harold Warren?" she queried.

"Just Harold Warren," he answered. "Took out a policy in Windmere, Vermont, last year, and never made good on it."

"That's him," the girl said, running over a record card. "He's taken out three policies in our companies—ten, seven five, an' five thousand. The five thousand's the Windmere one. Never made good on any of 'em."

"Thank you! I guess I'll leave him alone," Adams informed her.

He lingered a moment, obviously trying to think of something to say. The girl met his eyes and, sensing his embarrassment, helped him out.

"Is Windmere your home town, Mr. Adams?"

"Yes, and sometimes I wish I was there, this hot weather. It certainly is—restful there."

"Yes, I suppose so," the girl agreed, turning back to her work. "Though I'd probably stand it just long enough to catch the next train—if they have next trains. Maybe the country's all right, but I can't see it, somehow."

"Well, excuse me for bothering you," the boy said for want of something better.

"That's what I'm here for," she replied cheerfully. "Any more queer ones on your list?"

"No—no, thanks!"

He turned to the door while Miss Hubbell was picking up the telephone receiver.

Adams returned to his desk and crossed the name "Harold Warren" off his list of prospects. Then he leaned back in his chair for a moment and looked around the handsomely furnished offices of Harvey, Harrison & Fulsom—"insurance in all its branches."

Quite a contrast, he told himself, to the quarters of Pringle & Brown in Windmere, Vermont. He visualized the dusty insurance agency certificates framed upon the walls of the stuffy little small-town office; the tentative maps of Brown's addition, which had never materialized; the heaps of old newspapers and real-estate journals on the three untidy desks. The dusty dinginess to which he had been used certainly compared unfavorably with the clean mahogany of his present surroundings. Also, with a warm glow, he realized the contrast between the weekly twenty-five dollars he had received there and the guarantee of seventy a week that Harvey, Harrison & Fulsom allowed him—a guarantee that his weekly commissions had always exceeded.

"Guess I'll get me a better place to live," he soliloquized aloud. "That sure is a bum room for this hot weather!" He turned to the man at the next desk. "I'd like to get a new boarding-place, Daggett," he said. "Do you know any good one where I could get a big room—a really big one?"

"Lord, no," the man answered good-humoredly. "So you've been making more money than you know what to do with! Wish I'd come from the country, instead of being born in the only place in the world! Mine's gone before I get it."

"I *have* been lucky," Adams said diffidently, and he might have added with perfect truth: "If you worked as hard as I do, and went to bed earlier, you'd make more money."

"Ask old Harvey," the other man suggested, lighting a cigarette. "He takes a paternal pleasure in finding homes for his agents. Oh, Lord!" he continued, turning back to the list in front of him. "Every prospect I've got is ten miles from every other!"

II

TOM ADAMS was a good salesman because he believed implicitly in what he had to sell. On this basis he confined his soliciting to office hours, talked costs first, on the theory that every one wanted insurance who could afford it, and did not take his prospects out to lunch.

The system worked. It had worked in Windmere, Vermont, in the sale of numerous small policies—so numerous as to attract the attention of Harvey, Harrison & Fulsom in New York—and it worked in

the metropolis. It was hard for any one not to listen to a freckle-faced boy who talked in plain figures and evidently believed so earnestly in what he offered. Tom Adams prospered.

"There are just as many nice people in New York as there are in the country, and they are lots quicker at seeing things," he wrote back to the girl he had left behind him in Windmere.

His call on old Harvey, who had charge of the life-insurance end of the business, was an unconscious master stroke of policy. The senior member of the firm, a tremendously hard worker himself, appreciated the same trait in others, and, being an old bachelor, liked to exercise a fatherly supervision over his salesmen. Adams not only got a good room at a fair price, but also found a better list of prospects on his desk every morning.

The following week he pulled down his first big commission—six hundred dollars.

"Hail the conquering hero!" Daggett greeted him, the next day, with humorous ruefulness. "I made seventeen dollars and forty cents last week, and my expense account was twenty-eight. You've got Cincinnati leaving his plow beat a mile!"

"It was just luck," the boy said deprecatingly, trying in vain to think who Cincinnati was, and why he had left his plow. "All I had to do was to go in and get the application."

"You're some little go-getter," the New Yorker exclaimed. "I think I'd better begin to make up to you against the time when you're my boss. Here's two tickets for to-night to 'Mary's Pa.' It's a scream—funniest life-insurance agent in it you ever lamped. I've seen it three times. That's probably why a customer gave me the tickets."

"Thanks, thanks awfully," Adams answered, as he accepted the slips of pasteboard. "I haven't been to the theater much."

It certainly was pleasant to be liked and to be successful, he told himself, as he bent over the morning's list of prospects on his desk. He looked forward to seeing "Mary's Pa," too. The theater appealed to him. Suddenly he realized that there was no reason why he shouldn't go when he pleased, why he shouldn't buy tickets instead of having them given to him. What would he do with *two* tickets, though? He came to the last name on his

list, and as he read it he whistled. It was "J. Harold Warren."

"Now I wonder if that guy has got two names!" he asked himself. "He seems to be kind of chasing me. Well, it's easy to find out;" and he rose to his feet.

As he reached the file-room door, it opened, and a girl, her handkerchief pressed to her eyes, came out. A voice spoke from within:

"Go right to bed when you get home, Gertie, an' you'll be all right to-morrow. Get down early, 'cause I've just got to have you on the files then."

Adams stepped aside to let the girl pass, then entered. Alice Hubbell was bending over her desk.

"Was that young lady sick?" he asked, with ready sympathy.

"No, only a headache," the file clerk answered, turning toward him. "Gertie's got one of those cheap heads—always somethin' goin' wrong with it. What can I do for you, Mr. Adams?"

"It's—it's this Warren again, Miss Hubbell, he laughed; "only he's got a J. in front of his name now. Would you mind having a look, so I can see if it's the same man?"

The girl pulled out the drawer marked "Wa to We," and together they bent over the folder. Tom noticed how smooth and white was the cheek next to his. With a thrill of horror, he realized that he was actually thinking how it would feel to touch it with his lips.

"No, this one has ten thousand already. Looks as if you might sell another big policy, Mr. Adams. I heard you landed a fat one last week."

The boy thrilled with pride, and at the same moment a daring idea flashed through his brain.

"Would—would you care to go to a show to-night, Miss Hubbell?" he stammered out.

"What show is it?" the girl asked.

"Mary's Pa.' Daggett says it's very good," he answered.

"Why, yes," she said meditatively, her eyes still on him. "I think I would. Yes, I know I would!"

Tom Adams wondered, as he ran up the steps of the old brown-stone house on West Eighty-Fourth Street, if he should have worn one of those short-tailed dress suits. There was really no use in thinking about it, he decided, since he didn't own one.

Still, he could get one if he had to, he told himself proudly, as he rang the door-bell.

Alice Hubbell's appearance was rather a shock to the country-bred boy. She was dressed too plainly. To him the idea of a party was associated with fluffy muslins and a breath of perfume, the memory of which, if not the actual presence, lingered afterward.

The file-room clerk had none of these attributes of gaiety. She wore a plain blue dress that fell in straight but graceful lines; her hat was a small, close-fitting straw with a bunch of blue cornflowers; her hands were covered with white gloves. He approved the white gloves. They, at least, spelled party. That the girl was very pretty, he realized himself even before the glances of passers-by had told him so.

It was not considered good form in Windmere for a girl to be too enthusiastic over the few plays that came to the town. A certain reserve was *de rigueur*. References to other plays, in a sense derogatory to the one at hand, were customary. This girl was quite different, though. She frankly enjoyed everything from the first scene, evidently *intended* to enjoy it. When the life-insurance agent appeared on the stage, Tom forgot his traditions and joined in her mirth.

As they left the theater, the boy hesitated, was again at a loss. Would this girl be offended if he suggested something to eat? Personally, he was very hungry. Or should he limit his invitation to soda-water? He was torn over the problem. Finally he spoke, mentally cursing himself for the awkwardness of the words.

"I'm awfully hungry," he said.

"So am I," she answered instantly. "Don't take me to a big place—I'm not dressed for it. There's a nice restaurant on Forty-Eighth Street."

Tom Adams stood instinctively until the waiter had pulled out the girl's chair, then sat down opposite her across the little table.

"That *was* a good show," she said. "It was nice of you to take me;" and she smiled across at him with frank pleasure.

"It's the first one I've been to in New York," he acknowledged. "I used to go to them whenever they came to Windmere, though."

"Do men take girls to shows out in Windmere?" she asked, still smiling at him.

"They take one girl—the girl they're going with," he replied.

"Oh!" she said meditatively. "I see. Going with a girl out there is like being engaged to her here, I suppose?"

"Well, kinda," he agreed doubtfully, trying to find words to paint the subtle distinction. "Not quite, though."

"You generally marry the girl you're going with, don't you?"

"Yes," he agreed, still doubtfully. "Not always, though. You have to go back to get her, of course."

"She'd rather live here," the girl stated positively.

"How did you know?" he asked in real surprise. "Is that womanly intuition?"

"Intuition! I guess men called it that when they didn't want to let us know we got more brains than they have," she countered. Then she came back to the main subject. "Don't you like New York?"

"You bet I do," he answered enthusiastically. "I like it first rate. People are so quick to see things here, to make up their minds—when you *show* 'em."

"Good stuff!" the girl said approvingly. "You've got it right. Most people that come here have an idea that if they just wait long enough, they'll get some of the money that's lying around loose. They think they can sell New York anything. They must figure out that all the rubes live east of the Harlem River."

"I guess you're right," the boy agreed, looking at the pretty, animated face opposite him. "I like work, though. Do you know"—he leaned forward as if imparting a great discovery—"I believe it's the work that counts more than the money you make. I'm just as pleased when I've sold a man a small policy that I think he ought to have as when I got that big commission last week."

"You're right—money isn't everything," the girl reiterated. "If I expect to earn mine, though, I gotta get some sleep;" and she pushed back her chair.

Tom walked from West Eighty-Fourth Street to his boarding-house. He was conscious of having passed a pleasant evening. The girl was different from any he had known in Windmere. She was pretty, of course, but different—more businesslike.

There was a letter waiting for him at home, and he read it before he undressed.

DEAR TOM:

Since I wrote you last there have been two dances and a picnic. I went to the picnic with Willie Trainer, and to the dances with a Mr.

Fowler, who is helping father with some stupid real-estate thing.

Somehow Windmere seems awfully dull. I miss you, and envy you New York. I don't think I was born to live in a little country town.

Is New York really so terribly expensive, or do the papers just say that to keep people away? How much does it cost to rent a house there? Do you know what wages hired girls get? I suppose it comes to the same thing as here, in the end, because people get so much larger salaries.

Now I get to what this letter is really about. I'm coming to New York on Tuesday with Aunt Hettie. Are you glad? We'll be there a couple of days, but I've got to get clothes. We can go out in the evenings, though. If you can get another fellow and girl, we won't have to take Aunt Hettie along. It will be much nicer that way, don't you think? I'd like to see some nice shows. We're coming in on Fifty-Seven—the through train, you know.

Oh, Tom, I'm so excited at the idea of seeing New York—and somebody else. Can you guess who?

With love,

MARJORIE BROWN.

III

"THE daughter of my old boss is coming to town to-morrow," Tom told Daggett the next morning. "She'll be here two days, and I'd like to take her to some shows. What are the good ones?"

"There isn't a really good show on Broadway," Daggett voiced the common Manhattan bromide. "They'll all look good to any one from outside, though," he added, with the born and bred New Yorker's faith in the superiority of that metropolis over the rest of the earth.

"We'll pick out the two that are nearest good," the boy laughed. "Have you anything to do Tuesday and Wednesday nights?"

"No—what's the idea?"

"I'd like to have you as my guest, then. There'll be another girl, of course."

"Is the lady so tremendously important? Does her father own the dear old home town, or is it that she is be-a-utiful as a dream?" the New Yorker asked curiously.

"He owns most of the town—though I don't see what that has to do with it," the boy answered, somewhat nettled. "Marjorie Brown's the prettiest girl in Windmere," he added loyally.

"Your kind invitation accepted with pleasure," Daggett recited. "And I tell you what we'll do. Let's ask Alice Hubbell, in the file department, to be the other girl. She turned me down once, but she went with you the other night. She's an awfully pretty girl—a peach. It's a shame she hasn't money, and has to work."

"What difference does that make?" Tom asked with surprise. "I mean, if a girl works—if she doesn't have money?"

"You *are* an innocent infant!" the older man laughed. "Listen to my words of wisdom. In New York *everybody* is a gold-digger, men as much as women, men more than women. Men fight shy of girls who haven't any money, or connections with coin. Same in regard to a man—women simply won't waste time on him. Perhaps they are unconscious of this in some cases, but it's all part of New York. Do you suppose Alice Hubbell would have let you take her to the theater the other night if you hadn't been a rising young Napoleon of insurance? Not on your life! Didn't she turn me down? It isn't pretty, but it's so," and the man grinned good-humoredly at the country boy.

"You talk like a lounge lizard," Tom Adams laughed. "I'll go and ask Miss Hubbell now. I kinda hope she turns me down just on your account, though!"

The boy found out that the train familiarly spoken of as Fifty-Seven in Windmere got into New York at twenty minutes past four, and on Tuesday afternoon he was on hand to meet it.

Certainly the girl who came down the platform to greet him was dressed to do him honor. Also, she was very pretty. There were masses of fluffy blond hair underneath her much beflowered hat, her eyes were a deep blue, her lips a vivid red—redder than nature alone had painted them.

"How nice you look, Tom!" she said, holding out a tightly gloved hand. "New York clothes do make a difference. Oh, New York! New York! I just feel that I belong here. Aunt Hettie and I are going to the Waldorf, Tom. She's going out to see some relatives in Harlem to-night, and you can come to get me with your friends in time for the theater."

Daggett pleaded a dinner engagement that would make him late, so Adams called at the Eighty-Fourth Street house for Alice Hubbell. She had on a different dress from the time before—a black, shiny one that hung from her shoulders in a straight line. Her hat was a still smaller one—a mere handful of ribbons and lace—and again she wore white gloves. Tom felt the same lack of party characteristics in her attire that he had the first time, but chivalrously reflected that it was probably her best dress.

"This is much too gay a life for a working girl," she greeted him; "specially now that Gertie's sick. I wanted to come, though," she added quickly, noticing the look of embarrassment on the boy's face.

"You should get another girl to help you," he suggested.

"If I let Gertie go, she'd marry some weak-minded man, an' they'd both starve," Alice Hubbell countered.

"Did you ever think of marrying?" Tom asked curiously.

"Well, no," she said reflectively. "Can't say I have. You can't think about men while you're filing letters—that is, if you expect to put things where they ought to be."

"Do you like to work?" he continued his interrogatory.

"Why, of course I like it," she answered, surprise in her voice. "If I didn't—well, I've figured it out this way. There's just two kinds of people in New York—people that work because they've got to, an' people that like it. I like it, just the same as you do."

They came down the stairs of the Elevated at Thirty-Third Street and walked east to the Waldorf. The boy sent up his name and received the message that Miss Brown would be right down. While they were waiting, Daggett appeared, resplendent in a dinner coat.

Then came Marjorie, and at the sight of her Tom Adams gasped. Certainly this was party enough! The girl from Windmere was wrapped in a red opera cloak that swung open in front, showing a pink, low-cut frock beneath. There was a pink scarf over her much-fluffed blond hair, and her lips were crimson to match her cheeks.

Tom stumbled through the introductions, and they moved toward the door, not yet paired off, but still in a group.

"Is this your first visit to New York, Miss Brown?" Daggett opened the conversation when they were in the taxi.

"Oh, my, no, Mr. Daggett," she answered quickly. "I come up once or twice a year to get clothes. Most people in Windmere get their things in New York. It's the only place, isn't it?" she added, including the other girl in the question.

"You can buy things much cheaper here than anywhere else—if you know how," Alice Hubbell volunteered.

"It isn't the cheapness," the girl from Windmere answered airily; "but you get

the real fashionable things. I hate to be out of date, don't you, Miss Hubbell?"

"Yes, it's an awful thing," said Alice Hubbell gravely.

At the theater Tom found himself seated between the two girls, with Daggett on the other side of Marjorie Brown. He wished the arrangement had been different, for he didn't know how he was to talk to two girls at once. He might have saved himself his anxiety. Daggett opened with a direct compliment to the girl's blond hair, and in a minute they were deep in personalities of the sort that demand such answers as "Now you don't mean it!"

With mingled chagrin and relief the boy turned to his left-hand neighbor.

"There's Mr. Harvey two rows ahead of us," she remarked.

"Is he? I don't see him," Tom answered, craning his neck. "Has he seen us?" he asked, with the uncomfortable feeling that he did not want his employer to know he indulged in such frivolities as the theater.

"Yes," she answered, nodding to the senior partner, who had caught her eye and was smiling. "He goes to every show in town. That's all he does—except work."

The curtain went up.

After the play Adams shepherded his guests to Rector's, in deference to Marjorie Brown's pink frock and—though he did not acknowledge it to himself—to Daggett's dinner coat. The head waiter nodded to the New York man and guided them to a table near the wall. The place was filling with the after-theater crowd, and the boy expanded with the feeling of being host. Nevertheless, he wondered if other people noticed the contrast between Alice Hubbell's plain frock and Marjorie Brown's bare shoulders, his own business suit and Daggett's evening garb, as much as he felt it.

There were many glances at the happy young people, and the boy was too keen a student of humanity from his experience as an insurance salesman not to notice and try to analyze them. He saw with surprise that the looks bent on the girl from Windmere were smiling ones—kindly smiling, but nevertheless smiling—while the glances that rested on Alice Hubbell were graver and lingered longer.

The party had rather split in two. Daggett and Marjorie were talking with animation about nothing in particular; and

Tom suddenly realized that, of all things, he was earnestly discussing insurance with Alice Hubbell!

Marjorie chatted gaily in the taxi all the way back to the Waldorf. Tom was rather silent. He was thinking.

IV

ADAMS had just finished looking over his mail, the next morning, when an office-boy stopped by his desk.

"Mr. Harvey wanster see you, Mr. Adams," he said.

Tom rose to his feet in some trepidation. He wondered what had gone wrong; but the senior partner greeted him affably.

"Morning, Adams! Did you get around to that J. Harold Warren I had put on your list the other day?"

"Not yet, sir. I haven't been able to catch him in," the boy answered.

"It's quite as well," Mr. Harvey remarked. "Sit down. I want to talk to you about something important. In the first place, do you know anything about industrial insurance?"

"Yes, sir," came the prompt answer.

"Do you believe in it?"

"Yes, sir," the boy stated positively, hitching forward to the edge of his chair.

"Let's hear what you think about it," the old man demanded.

The boy needed no second invitation. Industrial insurance was his hobby. At the end of five minutes of earnest exposition of his subject he stopped.

"I see you know what you're talking about," the old man said dryly, trying to hide a smile. "I was to have dined with Mr. Warren this evening, but something else has come up that I must attend to, and I'm going to send you in my place. He is thinking of a blanket policy to cover the employees at his woodenware factory in New Jersey. Get up the figures and be ready for him. I shall telephone him that you are coming in my place."

Tom did not return to his desk, but headed straight for the file-room. He knocked on the door, then opened it. Alice Hubbell looked up from her desk as he entered.

"Your friend is a very pretty girl, Mr. Adams," she said.

"Who? Oh, yes, isn't she?" the boy answered abstractedly. "Could you let me have one of those XX7 form policies—the industrial insurance ones, I mean?"

The girl rose to her feet and got the document he wanted without a word. Tom took it from her hand, then lingered uncertainly. He felt that something was expected of him.

"I've got a big chance, Miss Hubbell," he finally blurted out. "I'm to see a man on industrial insurance this evening."

"Great stuff!" she approved. "I wish you luck."

"Thank you," he said aimlessly. "I—er—"

He hesitated, stopped, and bolted back to his desk.

It was eleven o'clock before Tom raised his head from sheets of figures, and found Daggett smiling down on him.

"You must be doping out your income tax, old man," he said. "Never have I seen such concentration. I say, would it be all right with you if I took Miss Brown out to lunch?"

"Go to it!" the boy said, and returned to his figures.

By three o'clock Tom Adams had mastered every point to his satisfaction, and was ready with all information as to costs. He lifted his head with a sigh of relief, and came back to the present. Then his mind flew forward to the evening. Should he go out and provide himself with a coat such as Daggett had worn, to dine with J. Harold Warren?

This train of thought led to a startling realization. He had absolutely forgotten that he was going to the theater with Marjorie and Alice Hubbell that very night!

"Well, it can't be helped," he told himself ruefully. "I can't possibly get back from Englewood in time for a theater, even if I leave immediately after dinner. I'll break it to Miss Hubbell now."

The girl greeted his entry with a smile.

"Have you finished with that absorbing policy?"

"Yes," he answered, then continued: "Say, Miss Hubbell, I just realized I can't go to-night. I'm—I'm awfully sorry, but couldn't you go with Marjorie and Daggett?"

"Oh, that's all right," she answered at once. "I made different plans when you told me about that industrial insurance this morning."

"I'm—I'm sorry," he stammered.

"You needn't be," she answered. "I understand."

Back at his desk Tom tried to call Mar-

jorie on the phone, but found her out. As he hung up the receiver, Daggett sauntered into the office.

"Daggett, would you mind running the party alone to-night?" Tom said. "I've got to go out of town on business. Here's the tickets, an' everything you spend afterward is on me, of course. Miss Hubbell isn't going, either."

"I'll be glad to," the other man answered, favoring him with a long stare. "It would have to be pretty important business to keep me away from your attractive friend, though, I don't mind saying," he added.

"It is," Tom answered shortly.

V

Tom's mind was full of the interview he had had with J. Harold Warren as he hurried to the Grand Central Station to see Marjorie Brown off on the ten o'clock morning train to Windmere. When he got out of the Subway, he hesitated for a moment; then he bought a beribboned box of candy and hurried on. He found Marjorie with Aunt Hettie, at track seventeen, waiting for the opening of the gate, a sheaf of roses in her arms.

"Awfully sorry about last night," Tom began; "but I got a big chance—industrial insurance—and I think I landed my man."

"How nice!" the girl said frigidly. "Of course I was *delighted* to be sacrificed, when Mr. Daggett told me about your devotion to business."

"But Mr. Harvey sent me," the boy defended himself, his exultation turning cold.

"Did you tell him you had an engagement?" she asked.

"No—what was the use? I *had* to go. You see it means that I may—"

"I'm not interested in business," the girl interrupted. "That's the great fault with some men—they can't think of anything but business, don't realize that money isn't everything. Mr. Daggett and I talked it over last night."

"Of course it isn't," the boy agreed hotly; "but this business brings me nearer to you, Marjorie. Money isn't everything, but you've got to have it!"

"Money separates more people than it brings together," she answered. "So many men think that so long as they provide for a woman materially, they have done all

that she has a right to demand. They do not count the little attentions that really make up life, that *are* life. A man's ambition should include the girl he's—he's going around with. He should share it with her. Mr. Daggett says—"

"Darn Mr. Daggett!" the boy said furiously. "I—"

"Gentlemen do not swear before ladies," she informed him. Then, as the gate opened, she flung back over her shoulder: "I hope you are successful, Tom—since your happiness seems to lie in that alone. I've asked Mr. Daggett to spend his vacation at Windmere," she added with acid sweetness, and moved forward.

The descent to Avernus is proverbially easy. Tom Adams did not know the quotation, but he was acutely conscious of the fact, as he gazed after the bobbing roses disappearing down the station platform. All his fine joy of accomplishment turned to ashes; the goal which he had striven so eagerly to reach the night before became unworthy of attainment. He tried to analyze what the girl had said:

"Money isn't everything."

Alice Hubbell had made exactly the same statement. All girls were alike!

"He should share it with her."

Well, hadn't he tried to do just that thing? The boy turned and retraced his steps to the Subway.

It was three days before Tom Adams had occasion to go to the file-room again. As he stood before the door, voices came out to him exactly as they had done when he first went to inquire about Harold Warren.

"It's just like this, Gertie—because you've got a good-lookin' face, you think you can give your brains a permanent vacation. Maybe it is hard work here, but let me tell you something. All work is like filing—you gotter know it from A to Z to make good."

"I hate work, anyway," came the whining answer. "I just wish I could marry some nice man an' be an insp'ration to him!"

"Inspiration! Huh! You'd be about as much inspiration as a—cold frankfurter! Now, you get back to filing, an' don't let me hear any more of this nonsense."

Adams opened the door.

"Some one has borrowed my rate-book, Miss Hubbell," he said. "Could you let me have another?"

The girl brought him one silently and turned away before he could thank her. Tom lingered uncomfortably, then found words:

"I'm to see J. Harold Warren at noon, Miss Hubbell."

"Yes," she answered tonelessly.

The boy moved toward the door and reached for the knob. Business did not interest women, he told himself bitterly. They were all alike!

VI

THE great trouble with success is that it leads to anticlimax. There was a momentary thrill over the astonishingly large check that came to Tom Adams as his commission on the J. Harold Warren industrial insurance. Then he settled back to the sale of smaller policies. He had a bank account, now, but it made him no happier.

"Money isn't everything," he repeated to himself bitterly.

The next two weeks were lonely ones for the boy. He missed the easy companionship of his home town, where he knew every one and every one knew him. Daggett had gone on his vacation, but the memory of his philosophy kept coming back to the boy insistently, and he did not like it. The thought that the New Yorker would not have gone to Windmere had he not known that Marjorie Brown was well off in worldly goods angered him—hurt his personal pride from some angle he could not define.

The summer plays were on, and twice Adams asked Miss Hubbell to go to the theater with him, but each time she politely refused.

Then heat descended upon New York in a choking pall. Tom tried Coney Island one Saturday afternoon, but its noise and blatancy repelled him. Each night the office force trailed out to the elevators limp and disheveled. When Tom had occasion to go to the file-room, he noticed that Alice Hubbell's face was growing white and drawn.

The next Saturday afternoon was breathless. Tom did not leave the office till two o'clock. Then he took the Elevated to Washington Square, where he climbed to the top of a bus. The city boiled and simmered about him, roaring like a giant in pain. The glare of the sunlight made bright daggers of every piece of metal.

At last Central Park showed green be-

fore the boy, a relief to tortured eyes. He got off the bus and went in at Ninety-Sixth Street. Once among the trees, the city seemed to move away. The roar of the giant did not beat so insistently in his ears. Beyond the drive Tom left the path and wandered over the grass, then aimed for a tree farther on. As he drew nearer, he saw that it had already been preempted. He looked down upon the figure of a girl sitting with her back turned to him. Then he looked again!

She wore a white, drooping hat and a pale blue dress, cool as the inside of an ice cave. It was not her clothes that riveted his attention, however; it was something familiar in the drooping figure.

The girl turned her head suddenly, looked up at him.

"Alice! Miss Hubbell!" he said, and dropped down on the grass by her side.

"How did you happen to come here, Mr. Adams?" she asked, but the boy paid no attention to her words.

"Why—why, you're different," he said, nearly in a whisper. "You're—you're different."

"No, I'm just the same," she answered quietly. "Just the same."

"You aren't," he contradicted, and then went on, more to himself than to her: "I was so unhappy, so lonely, so—so hopeless! And now it has all gone away."

"Don't!" She spoke sharply. "Don't, Tom! Please don't!"

"I know what it is, Alice," he cried triumphantly, leaning nearer. "Why, I love you of course! I loved from the very first moment I saw you—and I didn't know it!"

"But—but I thought it was that girl from Windmere," she cried breathlessly.

"Not for a single minute!" he answered, and then she could not have spoken if she would.

Robins flew down and inspected the boy and girl, then went about their business unperturbed; babies stopped on uncertain journeys and eyed them gravely; older people gave them a glance and then went softly on smiling back at them. All the golden afternoon they sat there, sometimes talking, sometimes silent.

At last the girl rose to her feet with a happy sigh.

"We must go, I suppose," she said, then added: "What are you thinking of, down there smiling to yourself?"

"Something Daggett said about gold-diggers. I guess I'll never be a real New Yorker!" he laughed. "I've got to see your family, dear," he went on more gravely. "Want 'em to know about me right off."

He rose to his feet.

"All right," she agreed. "I haven't much of a one, though. I'm dining with Mr. Harvey to-night, and you shall come with me. He's my only relative—my uncle."

THE DANCER TO THE BUTTERFLY

Oh, princess of the summer sky,
With robes of blue and golden flame,
Men call me, too, a butterfly,
And ask not how nor whence I came.

But summer days that come must pass,
With dreams that go we know not where;
Like raindrops falling in the grass,
Or songs that fade upon the air.

The reaper reaps and goes his way—
Ephemeral your life must be;
But my life, too, is for a day;
You are the counterpart of me.

If I, like you, can bring a smile
To faces dulled by care and wo,
I'll call my daily round worth while,
And laugh with joy as on I go.

Gladys E. Brower

Call Your Shots

EVEN AN ACHILLES OF BASEBALL MAY HAVE A VULNERABLE SPOT

By James W. Egan

TAKE it from me, Cinderella, this self-confidence stuff is a wonderful bet.

Just the same, it's a whole lot like a fast ball—not worth a whoop unless you can control it. And when a cooky figures he's so much class he can push out his chest until it resembles a bulging balcony, some guy is gonna come along and wreck his bungalow.

This is particularly true in that frantic and feverish pastime which begins in April with sore arms and ends in October with sore gamblers. The ball-tosser with the bloated bean may get by for a while, but sooner or later he's gonna find himself hoofing it away from the old onion-patch with no rain-checks in his baggage.

Did you ever hear about Clarence Hale, for instance?

Well, he was the freshest young thing in the Northern Pacific League. Of all the cocky babies I've piped in ball rags, Clarence probably won the French fried frap-pé. Every week he hadda buy a new hat. His waffle expanded so fast it made the mushrooms moan.

By trade he was a delivery clerk—that is, he drew down dough for pitching the pill—and to hear him warble you'd think that, compared to him, Grover Cleveland Alexander was a cripple, Stan Coveleski a false alarm, and Dick Kerr a mere accident in the chucking division.

Of course, I'll have to admit Clarence could hurl a little. He wasn't exactly a flinging flivver. He tossed for Joe Morse's Seapolis club, and was topping the league. He had swell speed and hooks, all right. He really could buzz that apple across; but the way he squawked about himself! He was the bird who wrote the game. It had never been played right until he poured his precious person into a two-piece uni-

form. That's the brand of bullet he was, if you make me.

In a popularity contest among the noble athletes young Mr. Hale would have received a few less votes than the Kaiser running for Congress. About as many ball-players liked him as understand the Einstein theory; and that don't require any adding-machine to tabulate the returns.

All the Cascade City players—and that includes yours tremendously—hated Clarence; particularly because we were one club this bright young man invariably hung it on. He was arsenic to our olive-busters, and we were lucky to beat him one brawl a season.

Knowing he had our number, Clarence usta get chesty with us on any and all occasions. Maybe you think that didn't make us sore. Oh, no, we wouldn't have given more than a couple o' dozen right eyes to bat him out o' the box!

When the Seapolis club blew into Cascade City, early in August of last year, for an important series, Clarence Hale had yet to drop a combat to our clan, and Joe Morse started him on the hill Monday afternoon. Seapolis was in first place, and as we were only a few points behind 'em, Joe figured on working his star chucker against us in three of the week's tussles.

Bobby Donald, boss of the Cascades, put in Silent Shepherd, our starboard ace, determined to lick this chesty cooky.

"Let's have a few runs off this fellow!" he says. "He's had his trimming coming for a long time, and to-day we'll knock that old ball down his throat!"

"That kid's got more brass than the solid gold cuff-links they sell on street corners," growls Larry Lynch. "If he beats us once more, we better hide in the alleys the rest of the week, boys."

"Oh, we'll have him out o' there!" barks Slush Andrews, his roomy. "We're gonna maul that monkey all over the zoo!"

All the talking and squawking failed to put it over, however. Clarence blanked us with three measly little base knocks. He seemed to have everything out there. Of course, the win made him swell up more than ever, and we were about as happy as if we had the typhoid.

"Pension us off, Bobby," Lynch requests. "Take the crutches out o' moth-balls and guide us to the old men's home. Know any railroad that can use a few section hands? We might swing picks, if we can't bats!"

"Oh, we'll win some games this week," Bobby Donald chirps. "That baby had something to-day. He was pitching ball; but we'll get him!"

"If we don't, please pour carbolic in my coffee!" rages Slush Andrews. "The lucky clown!"

Slush had a real grudge against Hale, and it hurt like sin to lose to him. Chesty Clarence had tallied with a frail that Andrews considered his own private property. It was sufficient to make our tubby second-string catcher rave.

The edge wasn't removed from the hemlock bowl for Slush when he chanced to see the Seapolis chucker escorting the fair fluff to a movie temple that evening.

"I'm gonna kill that monkey for stealing my Jane," Andrews yodels to Larry Lynch and me. "And I'm gonna bawl her out, too. I tried to make a date for to-night myself, and she stalls me by saying she couldn't go out. Oh, no!"

"That guy has more nerve than a flock of aching teeth," Larry chirps. "He's so fresh and full of music about himself he's able to stam pede the ribs. They like that stuff, you know; but he'll flop one of these days. This Jane of yours will get wise. You'll have her crawling back to you, Slush. Clarence doesn't wear well."

"I wouldn't care so much if she didn't have my goat," confesses the backstop. "It burns me up to lamp her with another guy—especially that monkey!"

Larry and I finally switched the subject, for Slush was getting very sour.

II

For the next day's m  l  e Joe Morse used Dizzy Coffman, a veteran with lots of head and mighty little arm, against us. We

went on a swatting spree. The final score was eleven to one, and every Cascade athlete snagged at least one safe wallop.

"If it had only been Chesty Hale to-day!" Slush Andrews sighs under the showers.

"We'll do the same to him!" boasts Eddie Potter, the big third-sacker.

Harry Fullerton, a very good little heaver, started for Seapolis on Wednesday, and we climbed on him for five runs in the opening canto. He was yanked, and Joe Morse was as sore as a split finger-nail. A victory for us would bring Cascade City within a game of first place.

"What's the matter, Joe?"

"We're gonna murder you all week!"

"Buy some more pitchers!"

"Why don't you send us out Chesty Hale?"

"Would you like to borrow a chucker, Joe?"

From the bench we razzed the rival manager for keeps, that proceeding being quite ethical in Class B. Morse tried to talk back.

"You fine bunch of horseshoe-packers!" he gargles. "You're so lucky you could pass counterfeit money and not get caught!"

"Well, you can't pass counterfeit ball-players and win games," retorts Larry Lynch.

"Poor Joe!" laughs Steve Carlson, our chief catcher. "Come over here, Joe. I'll give you the keys to the crying-room. Come on, Joe!"

Morse certainly was ready for the sobbing-parlor when the brawl ended. We pounded out fifteen runs to their five, and were all set to leap into a tie for first place with one more victory.

"Gotta turn one in to-morrow, boys!" Bobby Donald says.

"They'll probably use Hale against us, won't they?" ventures little Lee Kelly, the shortstop.

"We can beat anybody they start!" Ed Potter squawks.

"Well, I'm due to beat Mr. Hale this evening," remarks Larry Lynch, in the clubhouse. "He thinks he's as much of a pool-slicker as he is a pitcher. You know there ain't a thing that bird don't think he can beat the world at. He got bragging in the hotel lobby so much last night that I made a bet of five bucks I could skin him in a fifty-point straight pool-game to-night. I'll take some cockiness out o' him!"

"You'd better kiss that five farewell, Larry," observes little Kelly. "Chesty Hale is a real pool-slicker. He's just as good at pool as he is at pitching. You'll surely lose that bet."

"Well, I get mine on the 1st and the 15th—I should get crows' feet under my bright orbs!"

III

HAVING no other amusements to entice me that eve, I let Slush Andrews drag me over to the Green Baize to watch Larry Lynch and Clarence roll the ivories. A couple o' Seapolis athletes were the only other ball-players on hand.

Right on the break the chesty chucker ran ten, and when Larry missed after pocketing one ball, he wore a sneer that covered his face like the water does tideland real estate.

A number of pool-hall lizards drifted around to watch the exhibition, and Clarence shoved on all the dog he could stir up. It tickled him purple to have people watch him perform, whether he was playing ball, pool, or pinocle. That was right where Hale lived.

Among the innocent bystanders was one goof who seemed to have strayed in from the tall timber or some place where haircuts come about as often as the Fourth of July. He was a terrible-looking hick from his seedy clothes to his awful derby, but he appeared to be deeply interested in the game.

"Wonder if that yap knows what it's all about?" I whisper to Slush.

"If he does, I'll buy the near-beer," is my answer. "He looks like he oughta be Chesty's brother, don't he?"

Slush overlooked no opportunity to slam Clarence.

Clarence now made a run of fifteen, pulling off some fair shots, but finally fell down on an easy cut into a side pocket.

"You should have made that, mister," abruptly squawks the hick. "English on the wrong side!"

"What do you know about English?" snaps Hale, a trifle peeved. "I didn't think you spoke it, even."

"Oh, I dunno," grins the other. "I usta play a little pool once."

"Bet you were the champion of Sassafra Junction, huh?"

"Now you're trying to make fun of me," objects the hick, in such a comical way that

every one laughed. "Just the same, I can handle a cue fair to middling myself."

Larry Lynch ran ten balls before he stopped. Hale missed a long shot from close to the rail.

"Shooting a little hard there, mister," drawls the talkative rube. "If you'd played—"

"Never mind what I played!" gargles Clarence. "What do you know about it, anyway?"

Larry ran another ten, and the Seapolis chucker missed a hard shot for the end pocket, trying to cut it in.

"Now there was a perfect bank," butts in the hick. "You could 'a' got position, too."

"When I need your advice I'll write you a letter. Shut up!"

Although Clarence was growing angry, he managed to pull off a good break and ran twenty points before fozzling. He was within five of being finished.

"How did you like that?" he asks the noisy hick. "Got somethin' to say about that, have you?"

"Well, now, if you'd played a foller instead of a draw on the next to the last shot you might 'a' got position and run the table. If I—"

"Why, you poor yokel, I'll bet you never played a real game of pool in your life! You've a lot o' nerve openin' your face around here!"

Hale's temper wasn't improvin'.

"You ain't gainin' nothin' by callin' me names, mister. I reckon I ain't seen you show me any wonderful shootin' yet."

The hick seemed a bit peevish now, too. Slush and I were enjoying this, and even Larry was smiling, though he was losing his five berries. We started to razz Clarence, and he was fighting mad before long.

"You poor sap!" he addressed the stranger. "I'll bet you I can make you look sick in a fifty-point game after I beat this guy!"

"Well, now, I don't claim to be no slicker, and I—"

"Then keep still, stupid! I expected you were more talk than action."

"Meanin' I'm scared of you, hey? I'll prove I ain't. I got ten dollars here to bet I can trim you in a game!"

Cooling a little, Clarence began to hedge; but the crowd was on him. He pulled out his jack, and the other did likewise. The hick took out several dollars, dimes, nickels,

and even a bunch of pennies to make up the required amount.

"You'll walk home after this game, Simple!" Clarence sneers nastily.

He ran out his string against Larry Lynch, collected five, and then started his game with the hick. The latter was clumsy in the handling of his javelin, and didn't seem to use much judgment in shooting; yet he ran the table before his luck deserted him.

"Ain't warmed up, I reckon," he explains to the interested spectators, and peeled off his coat, exposing a shrieking striped shirt.

"You're doing well to run a ball," asserts Chesty Hale; and in attempting a draw shot he cued the ivory too low, jumping over it.

"Put a little chalk on your cue, mister," advises his opponent.

"Shoot your own stick, will you?"

That was the most novel game of pool I ever lamped. The hick had forty points when Clarence had twenty, and was continually drawling out unsought advice:

"Play more foller shots, mister."

"That ain't a good way to shoot along the cushions."

"Gosh, you could have made that combination easy! Look at me!"

"Now, call your shots, mister. I ain't no weegee board!"

The oddest part of it was the way he made marvelous shots, despite his clumsiness. This hick was either the luckiest or the most skilful player I had gazed upon in many a moon.

"Where did you learn to shoot?" I ask, once.

"Oh, got an ole bowling-alley down where I live, in Clam Cove, and I just naturally been practising some, mister."

He ran his last ten before Clarence Hale had collected thirty, and accepted the stakes with a grin.

"You ain't such a terrible bad shot, mister," he says to Clarence. "Just a little headstrong. Won't let anybody tell you anything. Want to get that idea out o' your nut. If you'd follered some of my advice, now—"

"Go on back to Clam Cove and tell them!" grits Clarence.

He walked away, boiling hot. Everybody gave him the merry laugh. He looked mad enough to kick the Green Baize to pieces.

I tried to get a chance to chew the fat with the odd cooky who had defeated Clarence, but he seemed to have slipped away.

"Some surprise party," I chirp to Slush Andrews as we left the pool-room.

"Oh, boy! That did me good!" chuckles the catcher.

IV

JOE MORSE trotted his prize delivery clerk to the slab next matinée. The first three frames we failed to get a man to first. Lefty Cole, a fork-hander, was doin' noble chuckin' for us, too.

Last of the fourth stanza found me, head of the battin' order, ready to take my cuts.

"Get on there, Tommy!" Donald squawks. "Let's make some runs now!"

Larry Lynch was out on the third base coaching-line, and Slush Andrews pacing the first base territory. Usually some of the pitchers were out there working, and I wondered at the sudden ambition on the part of two regulars.

Hale tossed one wide.

"You got the English on the wrong side!" Larry yells.

"Why don't you play a foller on them shots, mister?" drawls Slush.

I could see Clarence scowl. He heaved another ball.

"Chalk your cue! Chalk your cue, mister!" Larry howls.

Hale turned toward Lynch, muttering. Then he whizzed the agate at me. The pitch was so wild I tumbled into the dirt.

"Call your shots! Call your shots!" came from Slush.

"I ain't no weegee board!" mocks Lynch.

As I rose to my feet, I saw Clarence was trembling with rage.

"Mebbe he'll bank this ball, hey?"

"He kin make a combination just as easy!"

The tormentors on the coaching-line refused to let up. I walked on four chucked cherries. Bobby Donald followed me, and our leader has a pretty keen eye. He "waits 'em out."

With Slush and Larry drawling away in their affected rube dialect, Chesty Hale missed the skillet four times again, and Bobby jogged down to first.

"Come on, Gene; turn us in! He's gone up!" the manager squawks as Gene Gamble, our slugging center-fielder, sauntered up with his trusty mace.

"Here's a set-up, Gene!"—from Larry. "He leaves 'em nice! Right in front of the pocket!"

Young Mr. Hale managed to bend a couple o' strikes over to Gene, who is a port-side puncher, but finally passed him. The bases were as full as a bootlegger's customers, with a runner parked on each pillow. Blondy Berg, the clean-up clouter, was at bat.

"Trying to make fifty points, hey mister?" Slush barks.

"Keep your face closed, you fat-head!"

Clarence let his temper bubble over. He kicked to the umpire, and was told to get back there and pitch.

Our home crowd was piling it on to Clarence by this time, hooting and razzing him as only a flock of fans can.

"The wild man! The wild man!"

"Oh, there you are, Borneo!"

"Brush off the plate for him, ump!"

"Warm up another pitcher, Seapolis!"

"Say, Clarence! Did you ever throw a strike?"

Seldom had the bugs been able to go after Hale this way, and they hopped on him like kids on a merry-go-round. They had him drawn and quartered in less time than it takes to tell it.

"No jump shots, now!" yodels Larry Lynch, as Clarence buzzed the egg toward the pan.

It was a fast ball, a little above Berg's knees, and if there's any kind o' toss Blondy kills that's the baby. Our big first baseman crashed the wood against the olive, and a white streak sailed ten feet over the right-field wall. Four runs dribbled gaily in.

To add to Clarence's pleasure, Slush Andrews deserted the coaching-line long enough to paste a double down third base. Hale had gone up higher than the Woolworth Building. Larry Lynch followed Slush with a triple to the scoreboard, and then Joe Morse jerked his flinging ace. It was the first time in the memory of Cascade City fans!

We won the game in a canter, and it was a cheery crowd that shifted garments in the clubhouse.

"A tie for first place, boys!" says Bobby Donald. "Guess we found Chesty's number-to-day. We'll beat anybody they start now!"

"Look at the good coaching that fourth frame!" Larry Lynch observes.

"You pulled something, you two hombres!" Bobby looks wise. "I don't get the idea, but it worked, all right. Let us in on it!"

Slush spilled the story of the pool-game the night before, but it wasn't until Sunday's brawl was history that Larry Lynch added the salad-dressing.

V

JOE MORSE chanced Clarence again in the Sabbath matinée, but a hail of base knocks drove Hale to the tall brush in two sessions. Everybody was pretending to shoot pool-balls, chalk imaginary cues, and all that stuff. The pasture gate flew wide open, and Chesty's goat went browsing wild.

Following the fracas, which established us firmly in the peak bucket, a bird from the stands came out to see Slush Andrews and Larry Lynch. He was dressed sprucer, but I recognized the same hick who had trimmed Clarence for his ten berries.

"Hello, you Clam Cove slicker!" I greet him.

"Lay off me, lay off me!" he grins, without a trace of dialect.

In the clubhouse Larry Lynch and Slush Andrews bared the whole diabolical plot.

"Gentlemen and ball-players," Larry chirps, "I want you to meet my old college chum, Abe Peterson—formerly the sparing-partner and playmate of Billy Kopp, world's champion billiardist. Abe once held the pocket billiard title himself."

"Oho! Poor Clarence was framed, hey?" I yodel. "He got the same thing that happened to grandfather's picture!"

"Fine him, Bobby," Larry advises.

"Yea, brethren, Clarence was deliberately enticed, inveigled, and trapped into the contest. I was willing to lose five bucks to let Abe at him."

"Oh, I gave you the five back," says friend Peterson. "You see, I'm coming to town next week for a few exhibition games, and I dropped in from Seapolis to call on Larry. Andrews and he persuaded me to do one of the old stunts resurrected from a past that I'm trying to live down. I usta put on a hick make-up and cultivate a rube twang, and then walk into the city slickers' midst and let the smart guys try trimming me."

"But he's a tough baby to manicure," Slush Andrews chortles. "What a monkey you made out o' Clarence!"

"Anybody but Clarence would have tumbled, I guess," says Larry Lynch. "What cops my ibex is to think we let Chesty get by so long, when he's really easier to upset than a waiter with three trays."

"Every one has a weak spot, but you have to pick it out," observes Bobby Donald. "I feel sure Clarence is cooked, as far as this club is concerned."

"Those swell heads go flooey quick once they get started haywire," Abe Peterson utters. "I rather enjoyed handing a bunch to that young whelp. He talked to me rough."

Many and long were the laughs before we finally cleared out o' the clubhouse. The last rites were being held over Pitcher Hale, but they were hardly sad ones.

In the hotel lobby that evening I met Slush Andrews all dressed up like Easter Sunday.

"My girl wants me back, Tommy!" he exults. "She called up a little while ago and apologized for so long central nearly cut her off. I'm gonna go out right now and make her understand Clarence is out o' her line-up for the rest of his life!"

"That's what you wanted all the time, ain't it?" I squawk. "But you oughta make Abe Peterson your best man, Slush. You owe plenty to that guy!"

"So does Clarence," says the grinning catcher.

Yea, Cinderella, as I said previously and heretofore, this self-confidence stuff is a wonderful bet; but you can always lose any bet.

BALLADE OF THE MAKING OF SONGS

BEES make their honey out of colored flowers,
Through the June day with all its beam and scent,
Heather of breezy hills and idle bowers,
Brushing soft doors of every blossoming tent,
Filling their bags with drowsy ravishment,
Pillaging vines on the hot garden wall,
Taking of each small bloom its little rent—
Poets must make their honey out of gall.

Singers, not so this craven life of ours,
Our honey out of bitter herbs is blent,
The songs that fall as soft as April showers
Came of the whips and scorns of chastisement,
From smitten lips and hearts in sorrow bent.
Distilled of blood and wormwood are they all;
Idly you heard, indifferent what they meant—
Poets must make their honey out of gall.

You lords and ladies sitting high in towers,
Scarcely attending this sweet instrument
That lulls you 'mid your cruel, careless hours,
Melodious minister of your content;
Think you this music was from heaven sent?
Nay, hell hath made it thus so musical,
And to its making thorns and nettles went;
Poets must make their honey out of gall.

ENVOY

Prince of this world, enthroned and insolent,
Beware, lest with a song your towers fall,
Your pride sent blazing up the firmament—
Poets must make their honey out of gall.

Richard Leigh

Angelica*

THE ROMANCE OF A GIRL WHO WANTED TO GET SOMETHING
OUT OF LIFE

By Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

FIERCELY rebellious against a life of drudgery in a factory, Angelica Kennedy, daughter of a New York janitress, seeks more promising employment. Answering an advertisement, she applies at Buena Vista, a large country house near the city, and is engaged by Mrs. Russell as companion to an invalid daughter-in-law, Polly Geraldine, who is in deep sorrow over the recent death of her only child.

Angelica finds herself a member of a rather strange household. Its head is Mr. Eddie, Mrs. Russell's son by a former marriage, a high-minded and generous young fellow who is also a successful business man. His brother Vincent, Polly's husband, is of quite a different type—a highly temperamental person who poses as a literary genius though he has never had anything published, and who dramatically announces that he is going to the war, but makes no attempt to enlist. Mrs. Russell, herself a most eccentric woman, has a second husband, who is known as Dr. Russell, a curious little elderly man who purloins Eddie's cigars and flirts barefacedly with Angelica.

All the men, indeed, are attracted by the girl's beauty, though in different ways. Eddie shows her every kindness, takes a deep interest in her ambition for self-improvement, and finally asks her to marry him—an offer which she refuses. The selfish and unscrupulous Vincent pursues her hotly, and his domineering masculinity exercises a strange command over her. A creature of moods, he tells her at one moment that his deeply religious nature compels him to give her up, and then—while she is visiting her mother, in the city—he writes her a letter of glowing passion.

When Eddie calls for Angelica to take her back to Buena Vista, she again refuses to marry him, and he tells her that he is going to the front in France.

XIV

ANGELICA saw no one that night; but when she passed by the library, the door was half open and she heard voices in there—an unusual thing for that unsociable family.

Eddie went with her to the door of her room and wished her a good night, but she did not have one. She slept fitfully, and she had heart-breaking dreams. She felt confused and unhappy, awake or asleep. She couldn't shake off that dull remorse, or a certain sense of great loss which haunted her.

She got up early, hoping that she might find Vincent and talk to him, and arrange with him to put an end to this wretched, intolerable situation. She couldn't go on like this, in Eddie's house, meeting him every day. She knew that Vincent must feel this as she did, or perhaps still more bitterly. She looked forward to it as an exquisite relief, to pour out her heart to

him, sure of his apprehension; sure, too, that he would admire her fine feeling.

She was surprised, when she reached the breakfast-room, to see them all at the table together—Polly and Mrs. Russell up and dressed hours before their usual time; the doctor serious; Vincent in a neat dark suit and a new air of decorum. He glanced up as Angelica entered, and smiled, casually, the meaningless smile of his mother; then his eyes turned away. It wasn't a ruse; he wasn't pretending to be indifferent; she could see that he really *was* so.

Polly made polite inquiries about Angelica's mother, and then they had finished with her, and returned to their own absorbing preoccupation—the war.

In this one short week they had plunged into the war with fervor, led by Vincent. They cared for nothing else. Mrs. Russell had organized a tennis tournament for Stricken Belgium; her specialty was getting up entertainments and recounting atrocities of a certain sort. Ordinarily there were all

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sorts of fascinating subjects which one couldn't discuss, all sorts of the most interesting semi-medical details which were unhappily tabu; but now, provided one told of it as done by a German, one might say anything. Nothing was too degenerate, too shocking.

Polly spent much of her time in the Red Cross work-rooms, rolling bandages. She could do this with all her heart, without betraying a secret pity she felt for Germany. She had lived there so long, and had been so happy in her student days. She was convinced that the Germans were very wicked, and that it was necessary to conquer them, but all the same she was sorry for them; and she persisted in her firm hope that her own country would never enter the war.

"Yes," she said, "I do sympathize with the Allies. I hope they'll win. I'm glad and willing to help them; but I'd rather see them lose than to see any of our own boys killed!"

She kept to herself the horror she felt at the idea of some nice American boy killing one of those magnificent, insolent German officers she had always so admired.

Moreover, she didn't like the English. She had all the resentment, all the prejudices, of her little Ohio town against that lordly race. It wasn't Vincent's fantastic Irish hate; it wasn't really hate at all, simply a stubborn dislike. She found a compromise, as he did, by a preposterous worship of all things French. They were, apparently, fighting the war alone against overwhelming numbers of Germans, somewhat hindered by a small and very stupid British army.

Vincent gave a sort of inspired dissertation upon the French, which deeply moved his family but failed to move Angelica. She was too stunned by this change of atmosphere. She was of no significance now; she wasn't useful, she wasn't interesting. No one—not even Vincent—gave her another glance; and Eddie, her steadfast friend, wasn't there.

But the greatest blow of all was Vincent's attitude toward Polly, his friendly deference, their air of complete harmony. She watched them, saw them exchange smiles and glances, listened to their familiar talk.

He left directly the meal was finished, and Polly went up-stairs to put on her hat.

"I'm going to work all morning," she

said. "You can come with me and roll bandages, or, if you'd rather, you can stay at home and trim that hat for me."

"I'll stay home," said Angelica.

But Polly lingered, inexcusably, to talk about Vincent—how Vincent and she went to this meeting, how Vincent and she said this, how Vincent and she thought that. They both knew that this was nothing more or less than crowing. Polly had vanquished Angelica. She had got him back!

Of course she had no actual information as to his philandering with her companion, but she had observed, she had put two and two together. She had never suspected actual wrongdoing; she didn't imagine, somehow, that there was anything in Angelica's conduct to blame. She simply thought that Vincent had too much admired this lovely young thing, and that Angelica had had her head turned by the flattery of his attention. She felt justified in pressing her advantage.

Angelica endured it stoically. She wouldn't show even any interest. She listened to this talk of Vincent with rude inattention, and even went so far as to yawn.

"He is wonderful," said Polly. "He's organized a sort of club—the Friends of France—men that can't go themselves, but pledge themselves to get recruits. He says the war has stirred his faith. I'm very glad. He's doing wonderful work!"

"Why don't he enlist, like Mr. Eddie?"

"My dear, he'd never serve under the British flag. Eddie's in the Canadian service. Vincent's Irish, you see."

"Well, isn't Mr. Eddie the same as he?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose so; but he's a different sort of Irishman."

"Well, why don't he serve under the French flag, then, if he's so fond of it?"

"He can do more good as he is. There are plenty of men who can fight, but there are very few who have Vincent's wonderful eloquence."

"He said he was crazy to go," said Angelica; "but I notice he doesn't."

"He's married, too, you must remember," said Polly. "That makes a difference. Married men aren't supposed to go till the very last."

Their eyes met.

"Take him!" said Angelica's glance. "I don't care!" But after Polly had gone, she took out Vincent's letter and read it again. She couldn't understand it! She felt bruised, and weary, and sick at heart,

and baffled. A letter like that, entreating her to come back to him, and, when she came, to find him on the best of terms with his wife and quite indifferent to her!

"But perhaps later, when we're alone," she thought, "he'll say something."

But all that day, and that evening, not a word, and the next day, too, until it grew plain to her that he didn't intend to see her alone, that he was avoiding her.

So the next morning she wrote a note and slipped it under his door:

I want to see you.

He made no sort of answer; he went on all day as if she didn't exist; he wouldn't even meet her eye. When he wasn't going out in the motor to make speeches for the Friends of France, he was sitting in Polly's room, telling her what he had said at the last meeting and what he was going to say at the next one.

But Angelica was not to be disposed of so simply. She made up her mind that he would have to speak, he would have to tell her outright that he didn't love her.

"He won't find it hard to get rid of me!" she thought bitterly. "But he's got to say. I want to understand. What does he write me a letter like that for, and then be this way?"

She had a feeble little hope that perhaps it was only his feeling of duty that kept him from her, that he loved her and didn't dare to see her. She felt that if he would just say that he loved her, but that they must give up all thought of each other, she would be satisfied. She could go on living, if she had that knowledge. *Something*, however, he must say.

On the third evening she lay in wait for him. Polly and Mrs. Russell had gone to bed, and he hadn't returned yet from a lecture he was giving in the village; so she turned out the light in her room and sat in the dark, with the door open, waiting.

It was a melancholy October night. The leaves from the linden rustled against her window as they were blown from the branches, and a constant, monotonous, low wind blew, with a sound like rain. She sat as still as a spider in a web, grim, unhappy, filled with apprehension.

In the course of time he came in. She saw him hurry down the hall in his wet ulster and cap, and go into his own room. She was after him before he had time to close the door.

"I want to speak to you!" she said. "Why didn't you let me? Don't you want to see me?"

"No," he said. "No, Angelica, I don't." He hadn't even removed his cap. He put his hand on the knob of the door. "You shouldn't have come here," he said. "Some one might see you."

"I don't care! I want to know. What's the matter? What's happened?"

"I hoped," he said quietly, "that you'd let it drop without an explanation which is bound to be painful for both of us."

"I want to know where I stand. I want you to say."

"Sit down," he said. "I suppose we'll have to have it out."

She did sit down, and waited while he took off his wet things, brushed his hair, and put on a smoking-jacket. She was interested by his room; for a few moments it distracted her unhappy heart. It was a curious room splendidly furnished in black and gold enamel. There was a sort of Chinese idea about it, shockingly adulterated by European luxury; long mirrors, armchairs upholstered in purple, great bookcases, a black and gray velvet rug on the polished floor, a marvelous lacker screen concealing the bed, a little stand on which was a tea-set of pale gray porcelain with an odd black design. There were pictures on the wall—shocking, startling things, obscene subjects in brilliant colors; and in the corner a great ebony crucifix.

This exotic and voluptuous setting dismayed her. It proclaimed a Vincent of whom she knew nothing, and whom she could never comprehend. How in Heaven's name was she to understand the poetic side of the man, she so unpoetic, so crude? A man with tea-sets and crucifixes and such pictures!

He sat down opposite to her in a low, cushioned chair, his head bent, his hands clasped between his knees. Her foolish eyes could see, with tears, that rough, bright hair, those fine, strong hands.

"Angelica," he began, not looking at her, "I've been a coward with you. I've shirked this, because it is so intolerably hard to do."

She waited in anguish, with no idea of what she was to hear.

"You see, Angelica, the war has opened my eyes. I was—just going on, lost in your beauty and loveliness, not thinking—drifting, drifting to hell, and taking you

with me. And then came this thing, this deafening, colossal call to self-sacrifice, this monstrous revelation of the glory and holiness of duty. I'm not callous. I couldn't help but heed it. I couldn't go on in my old gross self-indulgence. Angelica!" he said, looking up and meeting her eyes. "This war has brought me back to God!"

"But," she faltered, "what does—"

"It means that I must give you up. My love for you is a sin. For me, a poet, slave and servant of beauty, you are temptation incarnate. You can't understand that. You are as cold, as pure, as an angel. You don't realize what love like mine is."

"I'm not!" she cried pitifully. "I do understand! I'm not cold!"

"Compared to me you are. My love for you was madness. I couldn't think of anything else. It wasn't the gentle affection you felt."

"I didn't feel a gentle affection!" she cried, in tears. "You *couldn't* love me more than I love you!"

"Do you?" he asked, in a sort of stealthy triumph.

She didn't see that. She was utterly sincere; and her beautiful sincerity, her tears, suddenly moved him to one of those tempests of remorse to which he was so prone.

"Oh, God!" he cried. "What a brute I am! I talk about giving you up, and all the time I'm watching your face for signs of love. How can I find the strength to let you go?"

"Don't!" said Angelica, with streaming eyes. "Don't let me go, Vincent darling! Oh, if only we have each other!"

"We can't have each other. It's a sin!" he said. "Don't you *see*? Oh, Angelica! Beautiful Angelica! Why don't you help me? Why do you try to drag me down, and ruin me, and destroy me?" He sprang up, his fine face distorted with grief and passion. "You don't know!" he cried. "Oh, my God! I have sinned! I have sinned! You don't know after what sufferings, what weary wanderings, I have come back to God! You cannot imagine! There is nothing I have not done; no infamy I have not committed!"

And then he began his awful catalogue. He told her of his sins, his vices—vile enough in reality, but exaggerated by his hysteria. He had no medium between ingenious self-excuse and the wildest self-accusation. He took a monstrous sort of joy

in his horrible recital. He remembered incidents from his boyhood, of cruelty, bestiality, lust, drunkenness, theft, every sort of dishonor.

"I've been in prison," he said. "No one knows. They thought I was in Canada that year. I've stolen from my own wife and spent the money on vile women. I've been kicked out of disreputable hotels."

It went on and on, a nightmare, things that Angelica had never imagined, all told in his coarse and vivid language which impressed his images upon her mind forever.

"Good God!" he cried. "I'm appalled! How can even the God of mercy forgive such things? Angelica! I am *lost*!"

He threw himself on his knees before her and buried his head in her lap.

"I have been in hell!" he cried. "What am I to do? God, who sees my heart, knows that I repent; but is it enough?"

A feeling new to Angelica came over her, a divine kindness and pity. She stroked his ruffled hair, and tried, in her blindness, her bewilderment, to find words to comfort him.

"Of course!" she said. "If you're sorry, it'll be all right. You can start all over again."

With his head still buried, he flung his arms about her waist and began to sob, hoarse, terrible sobs. She couldn't bear it.

"Oh, don't! Don't, darling!" she cried. He raised his head.

"I must be mad!" he said. "I'm so tortured. I long so, I yearn so, after God. I want to be alone with Him, to contemplate Him forever, in solitude—in a desert—to pray to Him—to make my songs to Him. Almost all my verses are of God, Angelica. And then I see a lovely face—I drink another glass of wine—I read a line of voluptuous beauty—and I am lost again. How will it end? Oh, my merciful God, how will it end?"

She spent almost all the night trying to quiet and console Vincent. She drew his head against her breast and kissed his forehead while she talked to him. She found, almost miraculously, words and ideas which gave him comfort, but with an effort which was torment for her. She had a sensation of fishing in the depths of her mind, and painfully hauling out some thought which she had not been conscious of having there. Her love lent her insight; she discerned the grain of terror that lay beneath the chaff of his theatrical eloquence. She was

able to talk to him with piety—she who had no religion, and had never given a thought to such matters. She assured him that his repentance would wipe out his sins.

"Why, Vincent!" she said. "I could forgive anything you did; and you know God must be more forgiving than me."

Steadfast, gentle, patient as an angel, she sat with him, listened to his confessions, his self-accusations, and absolved him in her love. Who could hold the man to blame for those faults which were his essence? Not God—not she!

The clock had struck four. They were sitting side by side on the sofa, both exhausted, pale, quite calm now. Vincent began to talk again, more in his usual voice.

"Angelica," he said, "Eddie told me that he asked you to marry him, and that you refused him."

"Of course I did, Vincent."

"It was a mistake, my dear. It's the very best thing you could do—both for yourself and for me."

"Oh, Vincent!" she cried. "I couldn't! You know I couldn't!"

"Angelica," he said, solemnly, "do it for my sake. Be my sister. I swear to you that all base and sensual feelings have left my heart. I am purged of all my lust."

Well, so he was, for the moment; but by weariness, not by religion. He had talked himself into exhaustion.

"You couldn't do better," he went on. "I'm not selfish, not jealous. My wish is to see you happy, and you would be happy with Eddie. He's a good man."

He was, in fact, so worn out after his outburst that he felt compelled to get rid of Angelica, not only for the present, but forever. He didn't recognize the feeling. He was conscious only of a great desire to dispose of her, which he fancied was concern for her welfare.

"I want to see your life happy and blessed," he said. "I want to see you with your children about you, you with your beautiful Madonna face. I want always to be near you, but only to worship you. I will be your brother, your friend. I long to see this, Angelica!"

"No," she said, "I don't want to. It wouldn't suit me. I'm not so crazy about getting married, anyway."

"For me, Angelica! I beg you!"

"No, not even for you. I don't want to, and that's enough. I'm young, Vin-

cent. I have all my life before me. You needn't worry about me." A mortal weariness assailed her. "I guess I'll go now," she said. "I'm pretty tired. Good night, Vincent!"

He kissed her solemnly on the brow and opened the door for her. She shut herself into her own room.

"Oh, Gawd!" she sighed. "Now what? This is getting too much for me. Can't even think any more. I don't know—"

She undressed and got into bed, though the sky had grown gray in the east. She felt obliged to sleep, even if it were only for an hour; but before she closed her eyes—

"One thing's certain," she said. "I'm going away from here, right away. I can't stand any more of this!"

XV

THIS one idea remained with her when she got up from her brief sleep—this determination to get away. Except for this, she was drained quite dry of all ideas, all feelings. She was not poetic; she hadn't the astounding variations of a poetic soul such as Vincent's. She was not at all easy to move, and when she was thoroughly aroused—to pity, to love, to grief, to whatever it might be—it took a very long time for the tempest to calm. She wanted now simply to get away alone, where she might examine this turmoil in her heart.

She packed her bag, put on her hat and coat, and went to Polly's room.

Polly was dressing in her very leisurely fashion, going to and fro in the room, and stopping now and then before the table where her coffee and rolls were laid. She was in petticoat and under-bodice, with her thin, fallow arms and neck bare and her black hair hanging about her face. She had a forlorn and jaded look—for which, however, Angelica had no eyes.

"Mrs. Geraldine," she said, "I got to go. I want to go right away—to-day. I don't feel well."

"I'm very sorry, my dear! What's the trouble?"

"I'm just tired. I've just got to get away. I want to go home."

"But if you're not very well, wouldn't you be more comfortable here?"

"No. I want to go home. I—you know how it is, Mrs. Geraldine, when you feel you just got to go home!"

Indeed Polly knew!

"For how long?" she asked. "You don't think you're really seriously ill, do you? You think a little rest at home will set you up in a very short time?"

Angelica hesitated a moment.

"I don't think—" she began. "I don't guess I'll come back."

"Never?"

"No."

"But aren't you happy here? Aren't you comfortable? Tell me what's wrong, and perhaps we can arrange it."

"You couldn't. I'm sorry, but I can't stay—not for anything."

There was no mistaking Angelica's tone. Polly saw that the girl was absolutely determined and not to be turned—not without a long argument, anyway, and that she had no desire to undertake. What is more, she had too much sense to ask questions. She had a suspicion that her husband was somehow concerned in Angelica's going; there was probably a great deal in this thing of which she decidedly preferred to remain ignorant.

She wasn't jealous; that had worn off on that first evening of Vincent's home-coming. It had hurt her dreadfully, then, to see his glance turn always away from her and toward this younger and lovelier face; but now she didn't care whether he was infatuated with Angelica or any one else. She was pleased simply to be on friendly terms with him, to have him agreeable instead of contemptuous, and she knew that was the best she could expect.

She had not the slightest hope of winning him back; she didn't even want to very much. She was so tired; she dreaded the necessity which love brings for effort—for keeping up, in appearances, in spirits. She preferred that Vincent should never look at her at all, rather than to have to endure his old critical glance. She was only too conscious of her sad decline.

So there was nothing in her heart but real regret that Angelica was going. She liked her very much, and was used to her.

"I'm very sorry to lose you," she said. "I'd hoped you were quite settled here. I'll miss you more than I can say."

"You've been very nice to me," said Angelica.

"And you must always remember me as a friend. If there is ever anything that I can do for you, come to me. I mean it!"

She held out her hand, and Angelica gripped it.

"Good-by!" said Polly again. "And good luck! I hope you'll let me know how you get on."

"Yes, I will. But listen, Mrs. Geraldine—can I have my money?"

"Certainly! You'll have to get it from Mr. Geraldine, though. He's in the library, writing."

Angelica was dismayed.

"No," she faltered. "I don't want to bother him. If you'll just give me my train fare, you could send me the rest."

"My dear, I don't think I have even enough for your fare. Mr. Geraldine handles all my money for me."

She was a little ashamed of this arrangement, to which she had eagerly agreed when she and Vincent were first married. It humiliated her to be thus, without a penny.

"You needn't mind disturbing him," she said. "He expects to do such things for me. Come up and say good-by to me the last thing before you go, won't you?"

Angelica said "Yes," quite absently. She was thinking how this interview with Vincent might be avoided. It was the thing above all others she most desired to avoid. She had meant to go off quickly, to *get home*, where she could think in peace, where she could try a little to remember and to comprehend what had happened. She didn't attempt to decide whether or not she would ever see Vincent again; she knew only that she did not want to see him *now*. But she was too well-trained in poverty, and had too much common sense, to go off penniless, without even her train fare, when there was honestly earned money due to her.

"Shall I wait for Eddie to come home?" she reflected.

No, that wouldn't do at all. She wouldn't know what to say to Eddie, how to explain her leaving. She felt absolutely afraid to see him.

"I'll just have to go to Vincent," she decided. "But *I'm going!* He can't stop me—I don't care what he says!"

It took all her courage. She went downstairs and into the library. There he sat, writing, as Polly had said. He didn't look up. She stood in the doorway, waiting, for a few minutes; then she said:

"Mr. Geraldine!"

"Yes?" he asked, not looking up from his writing.

"Mrs. Geraldine told me to come to you and get my money."

"I can't be bothered now!" he said irritably. "I'm busy. Can't you see?"

"I'm sorry, but I've got to have it. I'm going."

"Going, Angelica?" he said, looking up at last.

"Yes. I want to catch the ten forty. So if you'll just give me my money, I'll go right away."

He resumed his writing.

"Too bad!" he said. "I really haven't got it."

"Please don't be so mean!" she cried.

"For Gawd's sake, give it to me, and let me go!" Her fatigue and her distress at his callousness were unnerving her. She felt ready to burst into tears. "Just give it to me and let me go!" she said again.

"I haven't it," said Vincent.

"You haven't got any money?"

"Not a sou."

"But you can get it for me?"

He shook his head.

"No, my dear, dear girl. You'll have to wait."

"How long—an hour?"

"I can't say."

"But what do you mean?"

"I mean that I haven't any money. I said so before."

"But Mrs. Geraldine said you had all her money."

"Then Mrs. Geraldine will have to be informed, very kindly, that her income is mortgaged for the next two years. I had to do it. You see, she has a little annuity, which she lets me collect. Well, I was embarrassed. I had to borrow money against it. So, you see, that's *that*! She hasn't anything; and I—I'm penniless as a gipsy. Now you comprehend, I hope."

And to her amazement he began to write again.

"Say!" she cried. "This won't do!"

"Don't bother me, my dear girl. I'm at work," he said, frowning. "On a poem."

"But you can't put me off like this!"

"I'm writing!" he cried, in a sudden rage. "I don't care about you and your money. Let me alone!"

"You've got to stop writing, then. I don't care about you and your writing. You've got to pay me!"

He sprang to his feet.

"Get out!" he shouted. "How dare you trouble me about your dirty money? Good God! Lines such as I had, ready to

put down, and to have them ruined by a greedy, good-for-nothing little servant girl! I *have* no money. If I had, I wouldn't give it to you. You don't deserve it. Idling away your time, aping your betters, dragging about in their cast-off finery! If they weren't both of them lazy and worthless themselves, they'd have turned you out long ago. Get out!"

And he caught her by the arm and thrust her into the hall, slamming the door behind her.

Angelica rushed up-stairs like a whirlwind and into Polly's room, panting, quite beside herself with fury.

"Him!" she cried. "He turned me out! Took me by the arm and shoved me out into the hall! He—"

Polly had been putting on her hat before the mirror, but she threw it down in haste, to give all her attention to this frantic young thing.

"What were you saying to him?" she asked mildly.

"Nothing! Not a blame thing! Only just asking him for my money, like you told me. Ah, he's a fine feller, he is! The names he called me—and just last night crying and saying he couldn't live away from me!"

And she told all the story to Polly—even showed her Vincent's letter.

"Now!" she said. "Give me my car-fare, and I'll go."

"I have nothing. Perhaps Mrs. Russell—"

But Mrs. Russell was out. Polly was in misery. There was this terrible girl, demanding her money, implacably waiting for it, this girl whom her husband had treated so shockingly. Her own wish in life was to be rid of her.

"Take my ring," she said. "It's worth ten times what you want."

"I can't buy a ticket with it. I don't believe you have any money, the lot of you!"

Paradise was lost, her hopes destroyed, her pride mortally wounded; so, having nothing to lose, she let herself go. She threw off all restraint; she was as coarse, as fierce, as she wished to be.

Polly was wonderfully patient with the girl.

"You shall be paid," she said. "I'll go down with you to Mr. Geraldine. If he hasn't any ready money, he'll write you a check."

He still sat there writing. He paid no attention to them as they opened the door and went in.

"Vincent!" said Polly. "Will you please write a check for Angelica at once?"

Then he laid down his pen and looked at them for a long time in contemptuous silence.

"I told her," he said, "just what I will tell you. I have no money."

"But, Vincent, a check—"

He smiled, pulled a check-book out of his pocket, and wrote. Tearing out a leaf, he handed it to Angelica. She stared at it.

"What do you mean?" she cried.

Polly looked over her shoulder.

"Please don't joke, Vincent," she said.

"Please give her what is due her."

For he had drawn a check for ten thousand dollars.

"My dear Polly, any check I wrote would be equally ridiculous. There's nothing in the bank."

"Then where is it, Vincent?"

"I've told you. My investments—"

"But my income? Surely that—"

He began to show irritability.

"I tell you," he said, "that it's all gone. Now, for God's sake, my dear soul, go away! Can't you see I'm trying to write?"

"But my income—"

"Oh, you and your damned income!" he shouted. "You women and your beastly greed! Haven't you any soul? Can't you think of anything but money?"

"No, I can't, Vincent, just now. It's a very serious matter," said Polly gravely.

He jumped up with an oath.

"It's disposed of for the next two years," he cried. "You left it to my judgment. I've used my judgment. And now you come whining and sniveling about your handful of pennies. By God, I'm entitled to it! The whole thing doesn't amount to what you cost me in a month—your clothes and your—"

"Never mind that, please. Do you mean that we can't pay Angelica?"

"Good God! Is your head made of wood? Or are you getting senile?"

Polly went on, as unheeding of his gross rudeness as a rock is of the spray that dashes over it. Quiet and resolute, she pursued her investigations. Her money was her life, her peace, her freedom, her dignity; she knew that she could not earn any more, and that there was no other man to give it to her. She must have it!

Angelica observed her with profound admiration. Even to further her own best interests, even, she fancied, to save her own life, she couldn't have remained so calm, so self-controlled.

"Do you mean," she went on, "that we have nothing?"

"Certainly not! We have all sorts of things—paintings, books, your jewelry. Simply we have no *money*. Now let me alone!"

"But what do you propose doing?" she asked. "We can't go on, like this, without a penny. How do you propose to pay Angelica?"

He raised his upper lip in a brutal sort of sneer.

"Oh, you don't know, do you? Of course not! You're perfectly innocent, aren't you? You never suspected, did you, who it was paid for the clothes on your back? It'll be such a shock to you, dear soul! In our need we shall have to turn to Eddie! He'll pay Angelica, he'll pay me, and he'll pay you. God bless Eddie!"

That blow told. Polly winced under it. She turned away slowly and went out of the room. Angelica followed her, and, looking back from the doorway, she saw Vincent writing again.

Angelica had started an avalanche. She was deeply impressed and interested. She had no desire to go now; she wished to see the tremendous end.

Events moved with satisfactory speed. Polly went at once to Mrs. Russell's room, to find her just arrived at home from a Stricken Belgium card-party. They closed the door; they were shut in there a long time together. They must, of course, have summoned by telephone the two unhappy and disturbed gentlemen who came in a motor-car later in the afternoon.

When these came, they all went into the library, where Vincent still sat. There was a dreadful scene. The newcomers were Polly's lawyer and the trustee of her first husband's estate, and they at once attacked Vincent. The trustee was non-legal and devoid of wise caution; he shouted threats at Vincent, and Vincent cursed him in the voice of a bull. He was beside himself with fury. The lawyer tried to frighten them both into silence, but he was himself so appalled and outraged by their ignorance of what was and what wasn't libelous that his arguments were weak.

Polly was distressed, but resolute.

"No!" she implored the raging trustee. "No, Frank, *don't*, please! Only find out just what has happened and see what you can save for me. Don't trouble to quarrel with him."

Vincent turned on her.

"Yes!" he screamed in a high, hysterical voice. "Yes! You'll fight to defend your *money*, at least! You don't care about anything else. It never pierced your damned self-satisfaction when I was off with other women—"

"Vincent!" said his mother in a low, shocked voice.

"Very well! Very well!" he cried. "I don't mind them knowing. I did take her miserable little income and spend it on other women. For God's sake, who wouldn't? Look at her! Do you think *she*—"

"Just tell him, please," said Polly to the lawyer, "that I intend to leave him immediately and to obtain a divorce, and that he must give up any authority he ever got from me."

"That will be arranged, Mrs. Geraldine," said the lawyer.

Suddenly Mrs. Russell began to cry.

"Oh, Polly!" she said. "Don't give the poor boy up! Give him another chance! Oh, do, do, do!"

She stopped suddenly. Vincent, too, stopped his violence and his curses. Eddie had come in.

Eddie's peculiar power had never before been so unmistakably demonstrated. He had never before had such an opportunity for showing how much of a man he was. He was master of the situation, master of every one. He brushed aside the clamor, the furious arguments; he wished only for information, and he knew how to get it.

He addressed himself chiefly to the lawyer, with now and then a question to Polly. He listened carefully, and one could almost read in his face the functioning of his just and clear mind.

Angelica watched him through the keyhole. This wasn't *her* Eddie, who stammered in her presence, who could be roused by a single look from her black eyes. Here was a man quite beyond her influence, immeasurably superior to her, a man undeniably fine.

She listened to him speaking. He addressed Vincent with a quiet, dispassionate sort of contempt; he told him that he would

return to Polly what Vincent had stolen from her.

"And I will apologize to you, too," he said to Angelica, when he came out of the library, "for all this that you've had to go through here in my house. I think you're quite right to leave. If you'll go up-stairs now, I'll talk the matter over with these gentlemen. You and I can discuss it later."

So it was over. The house was quiet again, and they were all shut in their several rooms. Angelica went to Polly's door and knocked.

"It's Angelica," she said. "Anything I can do for you?"

Polly's voice came, after a long interval, faint and mournful:

"No, thank you!"

So then where should she turn but, naturally, to Eddie? She was very unhappy. She felt ashamed of herself now, terribly lonely, banished, and disgraced. Of course Polly would tell Eddie—perhaps already had told him—all that Angelica had told her, all about that disgraceful affair with Vincent, and she would lose, or perhaps already had lost, Eddie's regard. Just when she needed it so, when she had been so cruelly repudiated by Vincent!

"Well, anyway, I want to see him," she said to herself. "Anyway, he won't fly out at me, even if he thinks I've been awful!"

She couldn't find him for a long time. She wandered about the house like a lost soul; and then at last she came across him on the piazza, sitting there smoking, in the chilly October evening.

"Mr. Eddie!" she said softly, from the doorway.

"Oh! Yes?" he answered pleasantly. "Is it you, Angelica? Do you want anything?"

"I just wanted to speak to you—"

"Shall I come in?"

"I'll come out," she suggested, glad of the chance to talk in the dark, and groped her way to the corner where she saw the light of his cigar.

"It's a dark night," he said.

"It's—sad out here," said Angelica. "So—damp, and all."

"There's a big storm coming. I wanted to speak to you, Angelica. I'm very glad you came. I wanted—I've some money that's due you. You see, I'm going away to-morrow."

"Going where?"

"To a training-camp—before I go to France, you know."

"Oh, dear!" she cried, with quite genuine dismay. "Oh, Mr. Eddie, I *am* sorry! I hate to have you gone!"

"I don't like to go," he admitted simply. "And especially I don't like to leave you like this. I wish that it could have been different."

She waited a moment.

"I suppose I better be going to-morrow, too," she said.

"I suppose so. There's nothing more for you here, Angelica. Polly's going away, you know, and—"

"Mr. Eddie!" she cried. "Tell me! Tell me, honestly, do you think I—it was my fault? If you'd only please tell me everything they told you—Mrs. Geraldine, and all! What did she say about me—and—that?"

"Polly?" he asked. "She didn't say anything about you at all, except that she liked you very much, and that she thought Vincent had behaved very badly toward you."

"My Gawd!" said Angelica under her breath. "She never told him! He don't know a thing!"

"I don't blame you at all," he said. "Not in any way. You lost your temper—perhaps you lost your head a little—but you had great provocation. You see, Angelica, Vincent came to me and explained the whole thing. I must say he was very candid and—and fine about it. He told me frankly that he had tried to—mislead you, and that you refused to listen to him; and that that was the reason he behaved so badly to you. Of course, he *has* behaved badly, all around—shamefully; but still—he has good points. I thought it was a—plucky sort of thing to do, you know, especially when we were on such bad terms. He said he couldn't bear to think of your being blamed in any sort of way."

Angelica was amazed and delighted that she had been made into a persecuted heroine. She was filled with admiration for Vincent's nobility; and yet she could dimly perceive that there was something behind it, that he gained something he wanted by this false confession. It seemed a miracle that Eddie had been spared, both by him and by Polly, those very facts which Angelica was so anxious for him not to know.

"He said he was sorry for the whole

thing," Eddie went on. "He begged me to try to influence Polly to give him another chance. I couldn't do that. I simply said I'd tell her exactly what he had said, and what he'd done. I did. I had a long talk with her; but she's finished with him. She didn't say a word against him, but—she's finished with him."

"But is it that—about me? Is that the reason she's leaving him?" Angelica asked, with anxiety.

"No! As far as that goes, there are plenty of things far worse—in *that* line, you know. No! I think it's chiefly about the money. She says she couldn't trust him again. She says it's impossible to live with him under such conditions. I suppose it is. Anyway, she's absolutely determined to leave him."

Angelica sat in silence, more utterly wretched than ever. Had Vincent just sacrificed himself for her? Did he really love her? And for his love was he to be utterly cast out?

"No!" she said suddenly, aloud.

"No what?" asked Eddie.

"Nothing. I was just thinking. There comes the rain!" she cried. "Gosh, what a storm!"

They both got up, to push back their chairs against the wall of the house, but even there it reached them—the spray from the rain falling in straight, heavy lines, dashing against the earth with a fierce drumming noise that filled the air and confused the senses. The smell of the soil, the dead leaves, the grass, came to them with its own invigorating freshness; and in spite of the chilly sprinkle in their faces they lingered, fascinated by the noise, the wet odors, the great black, uproarious void before them. They stood close together, their shoulders touching, their backs against the wall.

"Angelica!" said Eddie's voice in her ear, curiously flat and faint in the surrounding din. "Angelica, *can't* you? Just think—if I could only know—while I'm away—that you—that you were waiting for me!"

"Eddie," she replied, "I couldn't. Not now, anyway. Perhaps—later. I don't know."

"You mean—you think some day—it's not *impossible*? You *could*, then? I mean—I'm not repulsive to you?"

"Deary boy!" she protested. "Of course you're not."

"Do you think you could—kiss me?" he asked. "I'm going away to-morrow."

She turned, put a hand upon his shoulder, and kissed him on the cheek.

"There!" she said. "Now you see!"

He didn't move; stood there like a statue.

"I guess we'd better go in," she said. "We're getting wet; and I've got to pack up my things."

To go home! She began for the first time to imagine her home-coming, to think of her future. This was all over; she would never get another such job, never again be in a house like this, never again have a chance like this!

She began to think of the kitchen, of the factory, of their suppers of tea and bread and margarine, of her mother, listless and hopeless—all of it hopeless—even Vincent. What could he ever do for her, even if he had the inclination? Who was there on earth who cared to do anything for her, who could give her in any way the things she craved? Panic overwhelmed her.

"Eddie!" she cried. "I—could!"

He was suddenly galvanized into life.

"Could?" he cried. "Could what?"

"If you want—I'll marry you!"

His arms went around her, pressing her tightly against his coat. A smell of damp tweed and cigar-smoke filled her nostrils; she couldn't see or move at all, her head was so buried in his clumsy embrace.

"Oh, my darling!" he cried. "Oh, Angelica, to think that I have to go *now*!"

"But I'll be waiting for you," she said.

XVI

SHE stood on the front steps long after he was out of sight, lost in a painful reverie. The rain was still falling steadily and violently, without wind, from a pale gray sky. She watched it, absently, churning the gravel walk, splashing up again from the puddles. What a desolate and tremendous world that morning!

Eddie was really gone. She had said good-by to that generous and loyal friend, had pressed his hand and tried to smile brightly after him. He hadn't wanted her to go to the railway-station with him.

"No," he had said. "Let's say good-by here, in the place that's going to be our home."

He was in a bad state. He did all he knew to conceal it, but it was none the less apparent to her that he was deeply trou-

bled by the thought of what lay before him, that he was most reluctant to go, unhappy, alarmed, and a little puzzled. He was ashamed of all this, he wished to be a man, like Vincent, and he naively believed that a man was practically devoid of any emotion except love.

Nevertheless, disturbed as he was, he didn't for a moment neglect his beloved Angelica's interests. He wished to know how she was to get on.

"I'll find another job," she said.

He didn't object; he really considered that it would be best for her to remain sturdily independent, under no obligation to him.

"I've made a will," he said hurriedly, "so that if I don't come back, you'll be all right. In the mean time, if you do need anything, here's my lawyer's address. I've told him to give you anything you ask for without question."

Mrs. Russell, too, had gone. She had felt so upset by Eddie's departure and Polly's cruel behavior that she was obliged to take a ten-day motor-trip with the doctor and Courtland. She hadn't remembered to bid Angelica good-by.

Polly, however, had been very, very kind. She had given Angelica several little presents, which wasn't her way, and she had spoken to her with a sincere kindliness.

"My dear girl," she had said, "this has been a wretched thing for you. I only hope it won't really harm you. You mustn't let it. Try to forget it. Just now, perhaps, there's a sort of glamour—but after you've been gone for a while, I think you'll see it all more clearly"—meaning Vincent all the time, of course. "If only you could find some work that you could put your heart into, Angelica—something you are suited to! What do you think you'd like?"

"Well, I guess I'm going to marry Eddie—"

"Yes," said Polly, who didn't think that would ever come to pass. "But he may be gone for a long time; and meanwhile you'd like to show him, wouldn't you, what you can do?"

"I guess I'd like dressmaking and millinery," said Angelica.

"Very likely I can find some sort of opening for you. I know quite a number of self-supporting girls. Keep in touch with me, be sure!"

The house was very quiet. There was nothing to distract her, and Angelica was

able to meditate at her leisure. She thought first of herself and her return to her mother, of that "going back" which was so difficult to this ardent spirit always eager to go forward.

She suffered under a terrible discontent and restlessness. She was ashamed of the past, disgusted with the future. She felt that life, real life, was ended; the adventure finished, the mysterious charm lost.

Try as she would, she could not keep her mind from straying to Vincent. He was adventure and charm, life itself, for her. She told herself that she was going to forget him. He had treated her very badly, and she was done with him. She was going to marry Eddie and be done with Vincent forever.

But she knew that she could not. Wouldn't she see forever in her dreams that big, arrogant man with his hawk-like face and his bright hair? He had hurt her, but he had made her happy, too. He had come upon her with violence. Everything about his brief love-making had been startling and disturbing. She had often hated him, but she had always loved him—always, from that moment when she had seen him standing in the doorway of Mrs. Russell's room.

Then she gave her attention to Eddie, with a queer soreness of heart. She felt that she was taking advantage of Eddie; that he was too good for her. She was so sorry for him, so full of affection and respect for him—and so disinclined to think about him!

She fancied she saw coming the taxi which was to take her to the station, and she ran up-stairs to fetch her bag. Her familiar room was neat and desolate, with the green blinds pulled half-way down, the bureau and dressing-table stripped bare, the bed covered over with a sheet. All trace of her was obliterated. It saddened her; she took a last glance at herself in the darkened mirror and went out, closing the door behind her.

She almost ran into Annie, who had been on the point of knocking on her door.

"Mr. Vincent says he'd like to see you in the music-room for a few minutes," the maid said curtly.

"No!" said Angelica, and then, almost immediately: "Yes!"

After all, she ought to see him, after what he had done. She ought to thank him. Even if she were going to marry Ed-

die, there was no harm in that. In fact, Eddie would doubtless have approved of it.

"He won't eat me," she said. "Let's see what he's got to say!"

She tried to prepare herself for anything, whether she found him pleading, passionate, brutal, or depressed. She felt herself quite strong enough to withstand any of his moods—stronger than he was.

She entered again that little music-room where Mrs. Russell had interviewed her so long ago; but to-day it had taken on quite a new character. He had pulled the shades up to the top of the windows, so that the cold light of the rainy day came in to destroy the charm and romance of the armor, the harp, and the orange-shaded lamp that had so delighted her.

Vincent sat on the piano-stool, writing on the closed piano. He was without a coat, in a gray flannel shirt and old blue trousers. His hair was all on end, in wildest disorder, and his face, when he turned to Angelica, was troubled and ecstatic. He looked boyish, very touching, and his manner was altogether unstudied.

"Angelica!" he said. "Please listen to this! Just tell me—these few lines—do you get a picture at all? I mean—just tell me exactly how it makes you feel—not what you think of it, you know, but how you *feel*. Sit down, please, and keep quiet. Now, you know, this is almost the end of the thing—the chap's losing his faith—before he has the vision. It's free verse, of course—an impression:

"Men crushed down, like worms under a heavy foot,
Half stamped into the mud, but the other half
Still squirming. Writhing corpses
With writhing wounds,
From which the blood squirts violently;
And over it all, in a cloud of mist, rose and gold,
Rides God.
God! God! God, the father of all these mutilated animals!
God Almighty, whose will it is to kill his sons in these hideous ways!
He sees everything. He hears everything. He hears their yells,
Their howls for pity and for death. He could stamp the worm
Quite out of existence;
Smear it into the ground so that it should be obliterated and
At peace;
But for His own good purposes, He lets it squirm!"

Angelica was quite stupefied; she had no clue, no dimmest idea what to say. She didn't even know whether this weird stuff

was meant to be funny. She thought it was and yet—

"You see," he went on, "it's meant to be horrible. It is horrible, isn't it?"

"Sure!" said Angelica. "It is."

"Now wait!" he said peremptorily, and swung round again on the stool, to continue his writing.

"Wait!" he muttered again. "Don't go! I want you to hear this!"

She sat perfectly still for a long time. Then, suddenly, he groaned, looked round at her with a sort of glare, and tore up his paper with an oath.

"No!" he cried. "No! I can't *get* it! Lord, it's such torment!"

He buried his head in his hands.

"Angelica!" he said in a muffled voice. "Please come here!"

"What is it, Vincent?" she asked gently.

"Angelica! What's going to become of me?" he asked huskily, his face still hidden.

The question startled her.

"Why, I don't know," she said. "I suppose you—"

"But I'm all alone!" he said in a sort of bewilderment. "They've all left me, and you're going too!"

She didn't dare to touch him, but her voice was a caress.

"Vincent, I'm sorry!"

He looked up and seized her hand.

"Oh, my love!" he said. "Aren't we *fools*? Even to think of such a thing as parting! You and I, Angelica, to part! It couldn't be!"

"It's got to be, Vincent," she answered, trying to withdraw her hand.

"No, it's not. No, Angelica, you sha'n't leave me!"

"Vincent!" she said. "Don't! You've made enough trouble. Don't make any more."

"It's you who are making the trouble. You're breaking my heart, and your own too—yes, yours! You can't deny it! Every drop of blood in your body tells you the same thing. You need me and you long for me as I need and long for you."

"Please!" she said, beginning to cry. "You know I'm going to marry Eddie."

"There's no one else in the world but you and me. All other people, all other things, are shadows—lies—folly! You are a woman and I am a man, and we love each other. We cannot part!"

"I must!" she said desperately. "You know I must!"

"No! No! Only love me, Angelica, and care for nothing else. Oh, you could not be so base and cowardly as to leave me!"

"Oh, Vincent!" she sobbed. "You talk like a fool! You know I can't stay here!"

"Look here!" he said. "Eddie gave me a hundred dollars. Come away with me—now—this instant! Anywhere—it doesn't matter. Just as we are, friendless, homeless, penniless—just you and I, to make our way together in the world."

She shook her head, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Oh, why didn't you let me alone?" she cried forlornly.

"My girl, how could I? I couldn't lose you," he said, surprised. "I couldn't let you go."

"But you must!"

"But I won't!"

"If you do really love me, you won't make me so miserable—"

"Angelica, I don't love like that. I don't care whether you're unhappy or not. I want you! I am mad for you! Even if it means your damnation and ruin, on earth and in hell! I don't care for anything but you—not for God Himself!"

"Don't talk like that!"

"It's true. I know well what I'm doing. For you I've lost my immortal soul. I haven't a soul now. I love you as Satan loves. I want to drag you down to hell with me!"

Angelica, however, was by no means so concerned with hell as she was with this world.

"But think what would become of me!" she cried.

"Who cares?"

This view-point startled her.

"Well," she said, "I care."

"No, you don't," he answered. "You only care for me."

She wished to argue, to defend herself; but it was too late. She was lost. His words so appealed to the recklessness in her own nature, to her devil-may-care heart, that she could not counter them. She loved this man; her whole heart urged her blindly to follow him, to do what he asked, to hurry gloriously to destruction.

She made a half-hearted effort to get away from him, but he only held her closer. He looked down at her and laughed.

"No use!" he said. "You don't *want* to go!"

Suddenly she flung her arms about his neck, and clung to him, looking up into his bold eyes.

"All right!" she cried. "I don't care!"

XVII

MRS. KENNEDY was very tired that afternoon. She had just finished scrubbing a kitchen for a tenant, crawling laboriously across the greasy soft-wood boards with her brush and her pail and her cloth. There had been some foreign sort of fish stew cooking on the stove all the time, and the smell had turned her sick. She had got splinters into her water-softened hands, and her back ached with a ferocious, burning ache. She came down the basement stairs carrying the empty pail, slowly—far more slowly than she used to come.

"There's not a thing in for my supper," she thought. "Well, I sha'n't bother to go out and get anything. I'll just lay me down and rest. I'm tired—tired out!"

The front door was unlatched. She pushed it open with her foot, and went along to the kitchen. She wanted a cup of tea, but she couldn't make the effort to get it ready. She couldn't even lie down. She sat on the step-ladder chair, straightening her aching back and supporting it with one hand while her eyes roved about her neat and dismal little domain, hoping to discover what she very well knew wasn't there—something to eat, prepared and ready.

She was beginning to be dulled and blunted by solitude. Her life's incentive was gone; she had no reason for working and living other than an animal reason—to feed herself. Her spirit had no food, and it was perishing.

She had a vague distaste for death, which was just sufficiently stronger than her apathy to preserve her existence. She slept in her underground cave, cooked and ate what was essential, kept it and herself respectable and clean, and went dully on working, working, going wherever she was bidden, doing whatever she was told.

She had decided to go out to the corner, to buy two bananas for her supper, when the door opened and Angelica came in.

She was just the same—jaunty, swaggering. It might have been one of those long-past evenings when she came back from work, tired, but restless and hungry. She had the same shabby suit and ungloved hands.

"Hello, mommer!" she said.

Amazing to see the change in that worn face!

"Angie! For goodness' sake! I never looked for you! Why ever didn't you write, deary, so's I'd have something in for your supper?"

"It don't matter, mommer. I'll go out and get something."

"I'll get my purse—"

"No—I got some money. Listen, mommer, I'm going to stay home with you a while. Mr. Eddie's gone to the war and Mrs. Geraldine's gone away. Now, for Gawd's sake, don't begin to ask a lot of questions! I'm dead tired. I'll go out and get something for us to eat, and we'll go to the movies after. You put on the water for tea now, while I run to the corner."

But even after the front door had slammed, it was some time before Mrs. Kennedy got up to put on the kettle.

"What ever is she doing home now, all of a sudden, like this?" she asked herself. "I don't see. Oh, I do hope there's nothing wrong! She's so hasty!"

Angelica came in again with a great paper bag.

"I got a regular treat," she said. "Sardines, rolls, cheese, and a nice big can of cherries!"

"You mustn't waste your money, deary," said her mother mechanically.

They both set to work to open the tins, brew the tea, and lay out the supper.

"It does taste good," Mrs. Kennedy admitted. "Somehow, when I'm alone, I haven't got the heart to buy things and cook them. It's nice to see you again, Angie!"

"I dare say you'll soon be sick of me," said Angelica. "Now, come along, mommer, put on your hat and coat!"

They went out together, the tall, swaggering daughter, the small, decorous mother, along the swarming streets to their favorite moving-picture "palace." It was exactly the sort of picture Mrs. Kennedy liked, a "society" one, and in addition her daughter bought her a box of caramels. In every way a treat, a notable evening!

And yet, all the time, her vague anxiety persisted. She had questions which she felt she must ask. They went home, and to bed, without her having summoned courage to put them. Then, at last:

"Angie!" she said softly in the dark. "Angie!"

Not a sound. Angelica must have fallen asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow.

Mrs. Kennedy was very much surprised to see Angelica spring out of bed the next morning at six o'clock, for she had always liked to lie in bed till the last possible instant. Her mother was still more surprised to hear her say:

"I'll get the breakfast, mommer!"

"You needn't to, deary. I guess you want a little rest."

"Rest, nothing! I'm going out to hunt for a job this morning."

"But aren't you ever going back there—to Mrs. Russell's?"

"Not much! I'm going back to the factory again."

"Oh, Angie! I'm sorry!"

"Why? You made enough row about my going to Mrs. Russell's."

"Only because I didn't think you could get the place; but now that you did, I'd hate to see you go back. I'd like to see you better yourself."

"Oh, for Gawd's sake! That stuff again! No! Let me tell you, mommer, I'm through with all that. I'm all right the way I am. I'm good enough—as good as any of *them*, anyway."

She put on her hat and went out, without a kiss, without a good-by, and Mrs. Kennedy saw no more of her till six o'clock, when she came in, pale and scowling.

"What's the matter with the supper?" she said roughly. "Why ain't it ready?"

"I just got in myself," said Mrs. Kennedy. "I had a hard day."

"Well, you're not the only one," said Angelica. "What you got?"

"I'll have to run to the corner."

"Now, see here!" said her child. "I won't stand this! I'm not going to wait this way. If you can't have my supper ready when I get home, I won't come home—d'ye understand?"

This was but the first indication of a change, a profound change, in Angelica. Her mother saw it with anguish. She was rougher, coarser, more cruel. She was brusque with her mother in a way quite different from her old, careless fashion. She was cold, critical, scornful.

She had got her old job back in the factory where she had worked before, but she didn't bring her money home now. Her mother was obliged to ask for some, when

she had nothing left to buy what her child demanded; and then, fiercely reluctant, Angelica would throw down on the table a crumpled dollar bill.

Her habits were altogether changed. She spent no more evenings with her mother at home or at the movies. She went about with other factory girls, to dance-halls and cabarets of the cheapest sort. She bought herself daring blouses, thin as a veil, through which her lean brown shoulders shone; she wore short skirts, and had gauzy silk stockings on her long legs; she painted her face with exaggeration.

"Angie!" her mother remonstrated.

"You don't look *decent*!"

"I don't want to," she replied.

Night after night she stopped out until one o'clock. Then her mother would be awakened by voices in the courtyard—a kiss, very likely, a scuffle, a slap. That was Angelica and her escort, saying good night.

Then she would come in, jaded, irritable, the paint very brilliant on her pale face, and begin undressing—not in the dark, as she had done formerly, to avoid disturbing her mother. She would come into the room with no effort to be quiet, light the gas, and dawdle about, while the poor anxious woman in bed lay watching her, sometimes asking questions, but timidly, dreading a rebuff.

"Bah! I'm so sick of it!" Angelica told her one night. "Those cheap dances—those smart Johnnies mauling you round with their sweaty hands—and then a glass of beer and a whole lot of their cheap talk. *Cheap*, all of it! I'm sick of—everything!"

She had flung herself down fully dressed on her cot, her soiled white shoes on the clean spread.

"Just *sick*!" she repeated, with a break in her voice.

Her mother was moved.

"Maybe it's because you got used to better sort of people out where you were," she said.

Angelica raised herself and looked at her.

"*Better*! Well, maybe they were. I don't know. Only—I don't know—I did get to like having things nice, and hearing nice voices. All this is kind of a sudden change. And the bunch I go out with—Lord, what a bunch!"

"Then why do you go out so much, deary? Why don't you stay home?"

"Oh, for Gawd's sake, mommer! After working all day, a girl my age can't sit home alone all evening."

Alone! The poor woman winced.

"You could read magazines, or get books out of the library."

"I don't want to read. There's nothing in books. I want to live. I want to find out if there's anything—anywhere."

"What do you mean, deary? If there's anything anywhere?"

"Oh, it don't matter! I'm going to bed. Good night!"

They went on in this way for weeks. What misery for the mother! She was nothing to her child; she could not even serve her. Angelica had become completely independent. She didn't want to talk to Mrs. Kennedy, to go out with her, to stay at home with her.

Moreover, she had grown indifferent to the little niceties about which she had once been so fastidious. Sometimes she would get in earlier than her mother. Then, without waiting, she would get some sort of meal for herself, eaten off the tub tops, from the saucepan in which it was cooked. She would spend a long time dressing herself in her vivid finery, leaving the dirty pots for her mother to wash. Then again she wouldn't appear until late, long after Mrs. Kennedy had disposed of her meal.

"We met some of the fellers," she would say; "and we hung around a while and ate a lot of candy. I don't want any dinner."

One evening her mother weakly reproached her for her lateness.

"There I had a nice bit of chopped meat fried and ready for you," she said. "You ought to let me know when you're not coming in. It's a trouble to me and a waste of money to buy things and you not to touch them."

"Forget it!" said her child. "I'm never in any hurry to get home, I can tell you. To this hole! Why should I?"

"To see me!" cried her mother in desperation.

"Been seeing you every day for nineteen years. No, mommer, you can't keep me hanging round you any more. I got to be free."

"That don't mean you're not to be kind and loving to—"

"Well, I'm *not* kind and loving. Gawd didn't make me that way."

Her mother grew more and more certain that Angelica had met with some disaster

in her past situation. She thought over it at night when she lay in bed, in the day while she worked—thought of it with anguish and terror. Her peasant soul forgot its acquired American sophistication, and craved that age-old solace nowhere to be found in her present mode of life—a priest, a pastor, some one in authority to reassure her.

She hadn't even neighbors to gossip with, as people had in the "old country." There was no one who had seen her child grow up, who knew all about her, and could and would discuss her with kindly penetration. A stranger in a strange land, but—how wretchedly!—a stranger to whom no country was home. Certainly America was not her heart's land; certainly Scotland, the home of her parents, would have seemed wholly alien; while her husband's birthplace, to her, was little more than a fantastic dreamland.

Unto the third generation does this strangeness persist. Angelica herself had that peculiar lack of ease, that exotic quality; she was an outsider. Her factory friends, too—they were of every race, and they had all become alike. Bohemian, Irish, Russian, Italian—they had all the same air; but it was a foreign air. Their adopted country had undeniably changed them into something different, but it had not made them American. It had made them only strangers. It took away so much and gave so little.

One morning Angelica didn't get up. Her mother, in great anxiety, came over to her, to make inquiries, but Angelica drove her away with fierceness, swearing at her, abusing her.

"Let me alone!" she cried. "Shut your mouth and mind your own business!"

"Oh, Angie, Angie!" said the poor soul. "If you'd only talk to me! If you only had the sense to know how I could help you!"

"Shut up!" screamed Angelica hysterically. "And get out! Don't speak to me again!"

Mrs. Kennedy took up her pail and went out; but half-way up the stairs she collapsed. She sat down on one of the steps and tried to pray; but she didn't know quite what to ask of God.

Because she *knew*; she couldn't doubt any longer. She knew what was wrong with Angelica!

She didn't really want to pray. She wanted God to do the talking. She wanted to listen to Him, not to talk to Him; to discuss it, to ask questions, to have an explanation, to hear the voice of authority.

What was the use of sitting there telling Him what He surely knew? Or to beg for mercy or pity, when what she wanted was advice? Not that vague sort of "guidance" which one prayed for, and which really meant puzzling things out alone as best one could. There was one thing, though—

"Oh, Lord!" she prayed. "Soften Thou her heart and let her turn to me!"

She remembered afterward how miraculously this prayer was answered.

She was scrubbing the vestibule—a task of peculiar hopelessness, because people always came in to walk over it all the time she was trying to clean it. She heard a voice say "Mommer!" and, looking up, saw her child, huddled in an old wrapper, standing before her. Angelica was struggling with a deadly nausea. She was frightened and desperate, her face a sickly white, her hair in dank disorder.

"Mommer!" she said again. "Come down-stairs! I feel awful sick!"

Her mother got up, leaving pail and brush where they were, and put an arm around this beloved child, so much taller and stronger than she, and yet, in her youth and her ignorance, so much weaker. She helped her down-stairs and into bed again.

"Lie still!" she said. "That's the best you can do, my deary. It 'll pass away."

"Can't you get me some sort of medicine, mommer?"

"Nothing that would help you, my

deary," Mrs. Kennedy told her. "You've just got to bear it, Angelica."

The girl looked up with somber eyes.

"Mommer," she said, "listen! What do you guess is the matter with me?"

"Angelica, my deary, I *know*!"

"Then, mommer, I'm going to kill myself!" Angelica wailed.

Her mother said nothing at all, but to herself she said:

"Why not? It would be the best and the quickest for both of us. If you don't—oh, what's ahead of us, and how ever can we go through with it?"

Angelica searched her mother's face, but in vain; it was impassive.

"What else *can* I do?" she cried.

"There's always something that can be done," said her mother. "We'll try and think, deary."

"Mommer!"

"Yes, my deary?"

"Do you feel—different to me?"

"No, Angelica, nor ever shall!"

But she did. Strong in the simple soul was the old worship of the virgin. Angelica had been before a mystic and holy thing. She was now no more than a woman, like herself; and a woman is no fit object for worship.

Mrs. Kennedy wasn't shocked, in a moral sense. She didn't dwell much upon that side of the case. Her great concern was with practical problems—above all, how they were to get the money which she knew would be needed. She always spoke of girls in similar situations as "unfortunate," and that is just the way she saw it.

She sat at the bedside, trying her best to make some sort of plan.

(To be continued in the September number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

AT A RAILWAY-STATION

THE long dark house of the train
Opened an iron door;
A prisoner came to me—
A flower out of the roar.
We talked a little while—
A word or two, a smile,
A shadow of a kiss,
A little smothered sigh;
And then the long dark train
Shut fast its door again,
And in the foolish roar
I lost my love once more!

Albert L. Somers

Joan and the Jesse Window

HOW AN AMERICAN GIRL ABROAD EARNED HER LIVING FOR
A DAY

By Margaret Busbee Shipp

JOAN CHENOWETH consulted her platinum wrist-watch, in which some discreetly small diamonds twinkled.

"Half past nine! In three hours and a half I'll have no lunch, and in three more I'll have no tea, and three hours after that it will be time to have no dinner. Even architecture is better than slow starvation. If I had known how brutal that man in the bank would be, I'd have gone to the abbey to see that Jesse window!"

Joan's meaning may not be entirely clear. In fact, her state of mind was so chaotic that its contents need to be arranged alphabetically.

Abbey—An old church at Dorchester, a village on the Thames, containing a celebrated Jesse window. At the bottom of the window is the stone figure of Jesse, the father of David, and springing from him the genealogical tree with the figures of his descendants on its branches. The stone branches of the tree make the mullions and tracery of the window. Joan had inexorably refused to evince the slightest interest in it. Even the most accommodating worm will turn somewhere, and this window was where the girl had obstinately decided to turn.

Architecture—Her Aunt Cornelia's latest fad. Aunt Cornelia Brennan was magnificently exuberant. It was amazing that a person could bubble for years and not boil over and have done with it. Uncle Henry Brennan possessed a lazy sense of humor, and his wife's enthusiasms diverted him. Last year it had been peacocks—the neglected bird of Juno. Peacocks strutted about on the lawn and deafened everybody with their hideous cries. Aunt Cornelia, gorgeous in peacock-blue velvet, with a peacock-feather fan large enough for a fire-screen, was eloquent in descriptions of the

days of chivalry when solemn oaths were sworn "on the peacock" at stately banquets. She suggested to Uncle Henry that it would be a splendid idea for his Rotary Club to adopt for their luncheons; but when Joan returned from college for the Easter vacation, not a stray feather was in evidence. The furniture was upholstered in a cubistic design, and Aunt Cornelia was immersed in free verse. Uncle Henry, who had been tolerant toward genealogy, folklore, china-painting, Japanese prints, and birds of Juno, became restive under evenings of free verse.

It was through a poem to a skyscraper that Aunt Cornelia was aroused to the defense of the ancient forms of building. She began to swallow books on Gothic art like a hungry constrictor, and she purposed to spend the summer assimilating them. At Mr. Brennan's suggestion Joan had come over to England with them. A hundred attractions beckoned to the girl, whose first visit it was, but her aunt insisted that they must not be diverted from her plan of dedicating their days to what she called a "Perpendicular pilgrimage."

With a staggering list of parish churches to be done in a week, Aunt Cornelia had just set forth in the car with her husband, while Joan begged to be allowed to stay in Oxford until their return. She was cozily settled in lodgings which were occupied by students during the term, and she yearned for a few quiet days to revel in her own will. Their week in Oxford had been spent in indefatigable sightseeing—or rather Aunt Cornelia and Joan had trotted about ceaselessly, while Uncle Henry basked in undefined engine troubles which demanded his personal supervision.

Joan spent her first afternoon of freedom in a riot of shopping, as it was her first op-

portunity to select presents without supervision. In an antique shop she chanced upon a most enticing silver pitcher, one that her mother would adore. Another customer decided to take it, then decided not to decide that afternoon. As soon as she was out of the door Joan pounced upon the treasure, but it was rather an extravagant purchase, and left her with barely enough shillings to buy her dinner.

Brute in Bank—The next morning, with a joyous sense of an unencumbered day, Joan went to the bank to cash a check which her mother had sent a few days before. When a check came, Joan merely indorsed it to Uncle Henry—who was her guardian and her mother's brother—and he thrust it into his pocket and gave her the money, and that was all there was to that; but it seemed the matter wasn't so simple on one's own responsibility. She handed it to the cashier and asked pleasantly:

"I'd like part of it in change, please."

The cashier examined the check somewhat superciliously.

"Do you actually expect me to pay you four hundred and thirty-five dollars on that check?" he inquired.

He was a married man, and things had not gone well at breakfast; and even if he noticed that it was an extraordinarily pretty girl who was speaking, it meant nothing to him.

"But that's the big Southern cotton-mills, and everybody knows it's a perfectly good check," she protested.

"I don't mean to be personal, of course, but how do I know you didn't pick it up on the street? You would have to be identified, you know."

"Oh, I have a passport," she began.

"You might have picked that up along with the check," said the man.

This made Joan's temper flash.

"It would be difficult to arrange a face to match the photograph on the passport at such short notice."

"Oh, I don't know," returned the cashier. "Photographs are often misleading. We are not cashing American dividend checks, as I said. Even if we did, we should have to deduct six shillings out of every pound, as that is the British tax on dividend checks, English or foreign."

He returned to his figures with calm finality, and Joan walked out of the bank.

It was half past nine on a glorious morning, and she had no meal in prospect until

to-morrow's breakfast. Mr. Brennan had arranged for breakfast with their landlady, but they were to go out for their other meals; it was only on this condition that she had consented to take them, as her cook was on a vacation.

If Joan confided that she was suddenly penniless, her landlady might regard her as a doubtful risk and turn her out altogether. At the thought of trying to reach the Brennans by wire, her teeth clenched. Whatever happened, Aunt Cornelia should never know.

Alone in Oxford, unknown, penniless, equipped with nothing but youth and health and a week's sightseeing—what was one to do?

Her resolution seemed to leap at her, full-grown.

"If I could meet some nice women from the United States and guide them over Oxford! If I could earn my own living for a week—wouldn't it be *fun*?"

II

SHE had exactly threepence in her purse. She spent one penny for bus fare to the station and another for a platform ticket. When the next train deposited its passengers, she chose the most promising—a woman—and went up to her. Her heart beat fast as she ventured timidly:

"W-would you like a g-guide, madam?"

An unmistakably English voice greeted a belated brother, and then its owner turned to Joan.

"Sorry! Did you ask me something?"

"Nothing of any importance," Joan stammered, backing away.

As they passed out of sight she took herself to task.

"Idiot! Nobody would want a scared rabbit for a guide. When the next train comes I'm going to be as bold as—as a porter!"

She felt apprehensive lest her platform ticket might have a time limit, and she was relieved when another train came and a number of passengers got off. They all looked busy and occupied, and not in the least desirous of being personally conducted. Then she saw a man carrying a pigskin suit-case with the name in small letters:

R. C. VIDMER, New York.

This was her chance. She held her voice level and asked with a naturalness which gratified her:

"Do you wish a guide over Oxford?"

The tall young man looked at her in surprise.

"A guide?" he repeated rather doubtfully.

His hesitation gave her courage.

"The price is only three shillings and sixpence. Oxford isn't one great big university like Harvard, you know; it's twenty-one—I think it's twenty-one—different colleges. You will lose a great deal of time if you do not have some competent person to guide you. It is impossible to see them all in one day—"

"I should think it might be!" said the man.

His manner was slightly hostile, as if he were on guard.

"But I will do the best I can to give you an instructive tour." She flamed scarlet as she added: "It is customary to give the porter at each college a small gratuity when he shows the chapel or hall. That is not included in my—er—fee."

The man stood irresolute, then decided suddenly:

"If you will wait a moment, while I check this, I shall be glad to avail myself of your offer."

When he joined her, she suggested that they might walk to Worcester College first, as that was the nearest one.

"With a limited time at your disposal," she began, in a manner which was bravely professional except that her voice trembled a little, "it is manifestly impossible to see all the colleges, so I think we had best see the special beauties of as many as we can."

"And what is Worcester's *pièce de résistance*?" he asked, a shade indifferently.

"I think it is the copper beech in the gardens," she answered, and for some reason the reply seemed to amuse him.

They passed through the arch which led from the green quadrangle into the gardens, and Joan showed him a great copper beech with its leaves purple-bronze in the sunshine.

"Isn't it superbly glorious? It makes one think of Joyce Kilmer's—"

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree!

None of the other gardens has a lake. I wish we had some bread to feed the swans." To herself she thought with sudden viciousness: "And I'd probably steal it from them to eat myself!"

She sensed Vidmer's apathy. Probably he was one of the many tourists who want to see what there is to be seen, so as not to feel cheated out of anything, but who at heart are bored. It seemed a pity when a man was young and strong, for it showed that his spirit was either dull or smug. Well, he was going to see things to-day. Her first client should have the worth of his three and six to the uttermost farthing!

From Worcester she led him to the Ashmolean Museum.

"But we aren't going in there?" he rebelled. "I detest purposeless poking around in museums. It's different if one goes with a definite object."

"We had a definite object." She stuck stoutly to her guns. "It was to see Powhatan's robe—the father of Pocahontas, you know. I was looking at it the other day, and I overheard a learned man talking. At least I suppose he was learned, because he had a fierce black beard and he used words like 'neolithic' and 'megalthic' quite casually. This robe of Powhatan's is embroidered in tiny gray shells, in a design of kangaroos. The bearded man said it proved that animal life over all the world was originally the same, and that kangaroos were once as plentiful in Virginia as they are in Australia to-day."

For the first time the client "came alive," as Joan put it to herself. His laugh was contagious, his voice confidential as he advised:

"You know I don't believe your bearded friend put in *all* the time in science that he saved in not shaving! Mayn't I just take your word for it about Powhatan's kangaroos hopping over old Virginia?"

Her smile mirrored his.

"I was going to show you that robe for its historical interest, but we'll go straight to St. John's gardens for pure joy. Just now the rockery is in bloom with that saxifrage the French call '*désespoir du peintre*' because it's a color which baffles the painter."

"I *am* in luck!" he answered gravely. "Lead me to it."

III

It was fortunate that Joan was as resilient as a young willow, for strenuous hours followed.

After they had seen Magdalen College they strolled for a short distance on Addison's Walk.

"Last week you would have believed Addison webfooted, for his walk was like a puddle," Joan told her client. "I'm glad it's sunny to-day when you are seeing it for the first time. Doesn't Addison himself seem different to you since you've seen that youthful picture of him in the college hall? How absurd it is to contend that personal beauty is only for the day and hour—as if all the world hasn't felt the spell of Helen's beauty, or Mary Stuart's, of Lord Byron's or Rupert Brooke's." It pleased Vidmer that she could praise beauty without a trace of self-consciousness in her charming face. "Did I tell you that this was the young Prince of Wales's college, and that it's pronounced 'Maudlin'?"

She took him to Keble to see Holman Hunt's "Light of the World"; to Lincoln to see Wesley's pulpit; to Pembroke to see Dr. Johnson's teapot. At Balliol she pointed out the tiny gold circle and the yellowed volume which were the original "Ring and the Book" with childlike homage.

"You are fond of Browning, then?" he asked gently.

"I simply can't imagine life without Browning, Barrie, and swimming," she answered with such earnestness that he forbore to smile.

She would not permit any indifference on Vidmer's part. In fact, her attitude was comically unlike the bored unconcern of the average guide, and bore more resemblance to that of a bantam with an unruly duckling. For instance, in the quadrangle at Christ Church, she came to a sudden stand.

"The sooner you look aware that you are seeing the most beautiful grass in the world, the sooner you may see something else."

Her client made an exaggerated gesture of helplessness.

"I have never been so hectored and bullied in my life! Just why is this grass any grassier than what we saw at St. John's or Magdalen?"

"It isn't, but it's the largest quadrangle, and so there's more of it to admire," she explained, with Kentucky loyalty to a perfect sward. "And now, if you are sure you appreciate its greenness properly, I'll show you the glorious hall, and the kitchen, with its gridiron big enough to roast a sheep. I suppose in old times a fat sheep cost about as much as a lamb chop does to-day."

"I've been hungry ever since you said

that the library at Merton had an atmosphere of 'tree calf and seasoned brains.' It had such an appetizing sound! After we see the kitchen, don't you think it will be quite time for lunch?"

"Very well," she agreed. "Then I'll meet you afterwards, to finish the others. I've saved some of the best for the last."

He looked dismayed.

"Surely you are going to have lunch with me? Won't you, please? We should lose time by separating."

"As you like." She tried to speak as if luncheon were a matter of minor importance. "In order not to lose time—"

So they went to a quaint hotel and made an excellent meal.

"May I introduce myself? I'm Richard Vidmer, from New York."

"I am Miss Chenoweth," she returned amiably. "For the present I am staying in Oxford."

"You have been pursuing your — er — avocation for some time?"

"Not very long. You will have to forgive my mistakes and omissions." Then she confessed penitently. "I am already ashamed of one of them. When we were in the hall at Christ Church, I knew I ought to show you the fan-tracery vaulting over the staircase, and I just *wouldn't*."

"Why did you try to conceal a ceiling from me?" he demanded.

"You said that you were 'rather fed up on sun-dials.' That's exactly how I feel about Perpendicular—Norman, Early English, and Decorated, too; but especially Perpendicular."

There was no question now but that she was holding his entire attention.

"As a diet, isn't that a bit unusual?" he asked.

"It may seem so to you," she answered gloomily; "but any day for breakfast I am apt to have a gargoye, piscina, stoup, ogee, apse, quoin, abacus, clerestory, triforium, or a flying buttress."

At his delighted laughter her mood became more expansive.

"Do you know some one intimately, of whom you are very fond, who is perfectly mad over architecture?" she asked.

He debated it.

"I do know a chap or two who lose their heads the same way; but architecture is a big word. What is there about it that you don't like?"

"It's the detail, I think. We've been to

Winchester recently, to see the cathedral. I never saw such purity of loveliness! It made one feel that it ought to be so simple to be good. It's breath-taking for one man to have founded that great cathedral, Winchester College, and New College — each work big enough for a single lifetime; but I couldn't sit there and dream about it all, because I had to look at the masonry."

"May I venture to inquire why?" he said, bewildered.

She enlightened his ignorance.

"Because wide-jointed masonry and fine-jointed masonry is the distinction between early and late Norman work. It's highly important, but not tremendously entertaining."

"Perhaps William of Wykeham would rather have one feel the finished beauty of the cathedral than fuss over the masonry," he smiled, "though that is interesting enough in its way. And so now I have the dark secret of the fan-tracery? While of course I disapprove of your secrecy in the matter, I could hardly demand a complete tour of Oxford and a thorough course in architecture for three and six."

She disdained to notice this.

"We're taking too long over our coffee when there's still so much to see. You'll love the Shelley Memorial."

As they walked along the High, "the noblest old street in England," they passed the new building of Oriel, with the statue of Cecil Rhodes. Vidmer bared his head for a moment.

"A great Englishman, and a citizen of the world," he said.

Later on, in the quadrangle at New College, Joan looked puzzled.

"There ought to be a big library over there where a luncheon was given for Mark Twain when he received his degree. This college is different from any other in the world, because there are no students here."

"What?" He shot the question at her in amazement. "No students at New?"

"There are only fellows here," she explained. "When distinguished men come to Oxford to get degrees, this is where they stay. I can't imagine why everything seems changed in some way." She consulted her note-book and exclaimed with relief: "Why, it's All Souls where there are no undergraduates, and where they had Mark Twain and Marconi and everybody! I'm very, very sorry I mixed them up."

"I am tempted to dock you threepence

for misinformation," he threatened. She looked faintly alarmed at the possibility.

"Shall we go into the chapel now?" he asked with a sudden impulse.

They chanced to be the only two people in the chapel at the time; and when presently the man knelt down for a moment, the girl knelt beside him, conscious that his face had whitened under its tan.

Then they went into the quiet gardens, where the wall, gray and inscrutable, seemed long since to have forgotten the old wars and young lovers on whom its parapets had looked down.

"No more colleges to-day, please!" It was as if he asked a favor. "Suppose we punt to Parson's Pleasure? You've had a rather strenuous day, though you don't look fagged."

"I shall be glad to go," she said with ready confidence.

She felt a thrill of pride in American manhood. How naturally he had accepted her on her own terms, how perfectly he had refrained from personalities or inquisitiveness! She wondered if it would be conceivable to a Frenchman, a Spaniard, or an Italian to pass a day with an unknown girl in just the simple and detached way this man had done.

IV

THEY strolled to the place where boats were kept for hire. Vidmer had made his negotiations with a youth, and had helped Joan into the boat, when an older man came from out of the boat-house and hurried toward Vidmer in eager greeting.

"I thought I heard your voice, sir! It's a long time since you've been up, Mr. Vidmer."

"It's good to see you again, Billy!"

They shook hands warmly.

"It makes me think of Captain McNeill to see you, sir."

There were a few sentences which Joan couldn't understand, though she caught the word "toggery," and—never having heard of the Torpid Races—wondered whether one wore it, ate it, or played it.

Then Vidmer said good-by, got into the boat, and punted along in silence. It was a deadly, shamed silence; for each one was afraid to speak. Vidmer had the advantage, because he could pretend to be occupied with his pole.

Joan gave way first.

"It wasn't fair to let me make an idiot

of myself guiding you over Oxford when you've been here to college."

"I won a Cecil Rhodes scholarship. My father was very anxious for me to have what he called a 'sound academic base' before I began to specialize. At the time I was in a hurry to begin my own work, and not keen to come here; but now I realize more and more deeply what it has meant to me. The interest on my debt to the great Englishman piles up every year. Beyond all, New brought McNeill into my life. His was the straightest thinking I have ever known. He was killed early in the war, as happened to so many university men."

At the sympathy in Joan's face he continued gently:

"This is my first visit to England since the war. I felt that it would be funning it not to come to Oxford, but this morning I braced for a hard day. When you asked to be my guide, I accepted it, because it promised some respite from my own thoughts. I couldn't understand it, of course, and I kept on thinking the explanation would come; but it never did, and you kept on 'guiding' as seriously as if your life depended on it."

"Not my life," she said with an embarrassment which bore the stamp of truth, "but my dinner." She explained her predicament, her cheeks rose-flushed over the absurdity of it. "You've heard of the 'deadly triangle'? The triangle in which I found myself was architecture, starvation, or making my own living."

"So you decided to spend the day guiding an architect!"

Joan almost rocked the boat in her humiliation and dismay.

"Are you anything else you shouldn't be?" she demanded hotly. "I teach you how to pronounce Magdalen, and you're an Oxford man. I tell you no students are at New College, and you went there. And I would run a mile to avoid poking around in a smelly, moldy Norman crypt, and of course you're an architect! Please just take me back to land and let me go."

For answer he sped the boat forward.

"Now as to the money," he began. "All you have to do is to indorse your check to me, and I'll send it home to deposit to my account there, and cash it for you in dollars. I haven't that much in pounds with me. Simple, isn't it? And if you'll do me the infinite honor of having dinner with me,

we'll stave off starvation until you can go to the bank in the morning and change your dollars into pounds. What shall we do with the three and six, and why did you hit on that particular amount?"

"Because I saw a sign at a tea-shop: 'Table d'hôte dinners for three shillings.' The sixpence was to tip the waiter. Keep the shillings, but I do want my sixpence, please! It's the first money I ever earned, and I did earn it honestly, didn't I?"

"You were the most conscientious and the very funniest little guide who ever guided," he teased. "I lived three years here without seeing many of the things I've seen to-day—the doctor's teapot, for instance. I'm convinced that of the thousands of tourists who see Oxford during the summer I am the only one invited to admire the clematis in the Botanic Garden, the fuchsias at Worcester, and that somewhat insignificant plant at St. John's. I begin to think of Oxford as a horticultural center, with a hint of learning on the side!"

To punt to Parson's Pleasure gave one leisure to discuss many things. There was time for him to allure her with the magic of "Mary Rose," and to make her promise to come to London for lunch and a matinee. In return, she began rather timidly—oh, but she should have blushed over human inconsistency!—to wonder why he had never seen that Jesse window. There was the merest breath of coaxing in her pretty voice as she explained that while other windows might have the descendants of Jesse in stained glass, this alone in all England had the tree and the descendants carved in stone, making it of incomparable interest to an architect.

His spirits rose to the zenith as she described the unique charms of that window—the window she had vowed never to see! He arranged to return on Friday, so that they might motor to Dorchester to visit it.

Then it would be time for Aunt Cornelia and Uncle Henry to return.

He indicated that it would give him inexpressible pleasure to meet them.

She returned that it would give her great pleasure to introduce them.

Their eyes met. Simultaneously, spontaneously, they sighed.

In all the world Aunt Cornelia Brennan was the last person who would ever have dreamed of that sigh. In fact, upon her return home she arrogated all the credit to herself.

"I never saw two people so perfectly absorbed in each other," she told her sister-in-law. "Joan is more interested in Richard than in her trousseau. It's an ideal match, and I'm happy to know that I made it. If I had not inculcated the worship of architecture in Joan, she would not have been more vitally interested in this young man than in any of the others. It was the common flame in both their hearts, and it was I who lighted it in Joan's. Why, those two would walk for miles and miles to see some ancient ruin where even Henry and I couldn't go because we couldn't take the car."

Mrs. Chenoweth smiled with the wisdom of mothers.

"Too bad they had to go alone! And you, Cornelia dear, are you as devoted to architecture as ever?"

Mrs. Brennan turned a surprised gaze on her.

"I? Oh, I fear I shall have little time to devote to Gothic art now. Beauty in stone led me back to a more fluidic, more docile form of beauty—that of the human form divine and its perfect expression in the dance. I met a most brilliant woman on the steamer coming home. She is to be my guest next week, and you will hear her lecture on prehistoric dances she studied from pottery made a thousand years before the Christian era. For me, my dear, architecture was but a threshold!"

Billy Bryan, Genius

A STORY OF REAL LIFE IN AN AVERAGE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

By John Harvey Sorrells

THE world is made up of average men. They wear rubbers, carry umbrellas, pay taxes, rear children, and grow bald. They have a favorite brand of cough medicine, go to church, and write letters to the editor. They maintain an immaculate, well dusted set of Dr. Emeritus Eliot's five feet of knowledge, but ravenously devour the Sunday supplement. They are the men whom philosophers ridicule, poets scorn, and historians ignore; but they are the men to whom the committees of the Fund for Starving Hooligans and the Drive for Stricken Hoodoos go first—and last.

The world is made up of average men, but in every community there is a genius. It took Billy Bryan about five years to become a genius; it took him about twenty years to live it down. The original blame cannot be placed on Billy; it was the fault of his parents.

When he was five years old, he copied from a newspaper a picture of a Japanese general riding a horse—presumably a Japanese horse. Billy's rendition of a Japanese general riding a Japanese horse was

about as bad as anything a five-year-old could draw, and probably resembled the jumbled fly-tracks that a five-year-old Japanese might produce as a picture of an American general riding an American horse; but Billy's parents pronounced it the work of an artist.

"The boy is a genius!" the father said fondly.

"There is money in being an artist," his mother remarked.

Billy entered school at the age of six, and for the next ten years he devoted most of his time in school to drawing pictures. His parents believed that this was a sure sign of genius, and they would say to their neighbors, with more or less pride:

"Billy just won't study. He spends all of his time drawing pictures. The boy is a genius!"

The neighbors, having boys who neither studied nor drew pictures, agreed that such must be the case.

When he reached his sixteenth year, Billy, with the aid of a girl friend of his own age and a black mahogany piano with yellow keys, discovered that he could sing.

From that time his drawing fell into neglect, and he assiduously devoted himself to the cultivation of the nasal phenomenon produced when he lifted his voice in song. His parents pronounced the noise he made beautiful, and reiterated, with added emphasis, that he was a genius.

A young man with nerve enough to go before an audience and sing a tenor solo was much in demand in Cedarville. Billy's scope of activities widened, and his enlarged circle of friends and acquaintances spoke of him as a boy with a future.

Two years later, he began to develop new signs of genius. His English teacher discovered that he could wield a facile pen, and she encouraged him to write poetry. He probably would have been doomed for life had it not been for John Fox, editor of the Cedarville *Herald*, who took him in hand the summer he graduated from high school, and encouraged him to write prose.

He worked for Fox all that summer, and wrote some stories—mostly about people—which John Fox, being a wary man and anxious to lessen his responsibilities in case of libel proceedings, published under Billy's name. The stories struck a popular fancy, and many readers pronounced him a young genius. Thus the title which an unwitting father had hung on him in his infancy became almost inseparable with his name.

II

At college Billy found a wide field into which he could turn his various talents to graze. He became a leading figure in the glee club, and in the course of various concerts given at female colleges in the vicinity he proved to be the inspiration for a number of poems which subsequently found their way into the pages of the female college publications. He also drew cartoons which were reproduced in his college year-book, and wrote some stories for the monthly magazine.

These activities, together with three months of football and a like period of baseball, occupied his time thoroughly, and he never gained more than a passing—or, more properly, a failing—acquaintance with his professors and their respective class-rooms.

It cannot be truthfully said that Billy's parents relished the picayune marks he received in his studies; but in deference to his genius they condoned his lack of studiousness. In his junior year, the war broke

out in time to prevent him from flunking in the third term examinations. He took himself and his genius off to an army camp, to inflict both on a portly sergeant who didn't care how many feet there were in a line of blank verse, but who had decided and profane views as to how steps should be taken in the execution of "squads right."

Billy found the mess sergeant to be the only man in the army who was allowed to possess genius; so he carefully packed his away and sent it home, along with his silk shirts and his pajamas. His mother was a highly practical person, and the silk shirts and the pajamas were not allowed to become moth-eaten.

Neither was Billy's genius allowed to become entirely dissipated. Billy partly attended to that; his parents and the *Herald* aided him. He wrote long and colorfully descriptive letters about life among the cooties and big Berthas. While John Fox might have doubted the veracity of some of Billy's picturesque flights, he gladly published the letters. They made good reading-matter. Also they served to remind Cedarville constantly that Billy was a genius.

The emergency over, Billy returned home with an overseas cap set at a particularly rakish angle and a vocabulary enlarged somewhat by the addition of a score or more of French idioms. He dutifully did his bit for his parents and the townspeople by parading about, resplendent in a new uniform with a set of bright service chevrons. About the time the new uniform needed pressing, he reclothed himself in the mental and physical habiliments of civil life, and began to look about.

Like other returned soldiers, Billy bided his time for a bit, waiting to estimate the situation thoroughly before deciding just how much salary he wished to draw each month. Jobs with bloated pay-envelopes all seemed to be hiding out; so when John Fox stopped him on the street and asked him if he was working, there was a flicker of genuine interest in Billy's eyes.

"No, I'm just looking around a bit," he answered.

"Want a job?" Fox asked.

"How much?" Billy countered.

"Well, I s'pose I can take ye on at twenty dollars a week," was the cautious reply.

That night Billy announced to his par-

ents that he had taken a position with the *Herald*.

"That's hardly a good enough job for a genius like you," his father commented.

"You oughter have asked for twenty-five a week," his mother added.

"Oh, I'm not going to stay there long," Billy returned. "I'm going to step into something big pretty soon."

Billy's contact with men of various classes while in the army had really given him a wider view-point and a deeper insight into human nature. Having been face to face with the grimmest of the grim realities of life—and death—his writing struck a deeper and a firmer tone.

John Fox, confirmed pessimist and cynic, did not share the popular belief that Billy was a genius; but the young man had been scarcely a week with the *Herald* before Fox caught the new note in his work. He encouraged Billy—not with idle praise, but with honest criticism.

Other friends, however, were not so conservative. His fresh and lively style of writing was lauded as a marvel of literary art. When he sang, gushing young things told him that his voice sounded "just like John McCormack." Once more the flower of Billy's genius was in full bloom.

III

BILLY had been home about a month when Freedman, publisher of the *Chronicle*, the rival of the *Herald*, took him aside one day and advised him to leave Cedarville. Billy had put one over on the *Chronicle* that day, and it struck Freedman that the law of probability augured strongly that the trick would be repeated. It also struck Freedman that it would be good policy to induce a young man who would prove a constant menace to the *Chronicle* to remove himself from the field of local journalism.

"Your stuff is good," he said; "but you'll never do anything here. This town is too small. What you want to do is beat it. Go where the grapes hang heavy—then all you gotter do is pluck 'em. I've got a friendly interest in you, Billy—that's why I'm giving you this advice."

Billy hummed a tune under his breath.

"Yeh," he nodded. "Wouldn't be surprised if you're right. Reckon I'll be hittin' the trail one of these days."

Leaving Freedman, Billy went across the street for a chat with Fred Harmon, clerk in the First National Bank.

Fred was squatty in figure and entirely devoid of a sense of humor. His mind worked ponderously slow, but was unerringly sure. He and Billy were of the same age, and had grown up together. Later they had served in the same company in France. It always made Billy feel pleased with himself to talk with Fred.

"Well, stupid! How's tricks?" he hailed.

Fred smiled broadly through the slender bars of his cage.

"Good," he said. "Mighty good with me. I was just looking at my bank-book. I've saved up twenty dollars since I've been home."

"You don't say!"

"Yeh."

"Say, Fred, what are you going to do with all that money?"

"Add more to it, I reckon."

Billy laughed, and pulled a quarter from his pocket.

"See that, Fred? Well, that's how much I've saved, and I'm willing to buy you a drink with it."

Fred stared at Billy stupidly for a space. Then he grinned.

"You're kiddin' me," he announced. Instantly, however, his face grew sober, and he winked an eye mysteriously. Lowering his voice to a whisper, and leaning closer to the bars of the cage, he said: "Say, Billy, you want to make some money?"

"Who you want killed?"

"I'm talking about you and me going into business. I know where we can buy an auto repair-shop pretty cheap. We can borrow the money to buy it with, and you can run it. People like you and—"

Billy's hilarious laughter cut him off.

"Say, Fred," he chuckled, "wouldn't I look fine running a garage? I haven't any more taste for a small business like that than you have for art. You're not going to catch me sticking around this place," he continued. "I'm going to step into something big before long—something that will suit my talents. Yes, buddy!"

Fred sighed.

"I sorter hoped you'd take to it," he said regretfully.

But the decision to step into something big remained always in the future with Billy. Meanwhile he worked along contentedly at the *Herald*, and after he had been there six months his weekly salary was raised to twenty-two dollars. Occa-

sionally he wrote a piece of fiction at white heat, and, scarcely taking time to read it over, slipped it into an envelope with return stamps, and mailed it to some metropolitan publishing-house. In due time, the story would be returned, accompanied by a neatly printed slip entirely covered on one side with the general views, religious tendencies, and political proclivities of the magazine. On the other side of the slip was a line of small type containing the information that the story was meritorious, but for reasons to be found on the reverse side, was not precisely suited to the needs of that particular publication.

These two pieces of fiction Billy would toss unemotionally into his trunk, and hurry off to practise a new song. His vanity was never wounded by the return of a manuscript. He mildly agreed that perhaps the story was not worth printing, and went his way, serenely confident that when he did get down to serious business things would be different.

And he intended to get down to serious business—some time. In the interim he meant to bask in the warm effulgence of the general admiration accorded a genius.

IV

Now there is scarcely a community anywhere that does not contain a maiden aunt. As maiden aunts are quite as likely to have nieces as to have nephews, it will not be flirting promiscuously with coincidence to state that in Cedarville there resided a Miss Jane Barker, and that she had taken into her home a niece whose widowed mother had recently died.

Evelyn Champe had lived in one of those doughty little cities that boast a suburb and a United Cigar store. Hence, when she came to Cedarville, which had but lately acquired a Woolworth, she felt a good-natured contempt for the place and its people. She spoke of "the natives" in a flip-pant manner, and termed Cedarville "a town like the one you see on the post-card—'Main Street on a Busy Day in Hogville.'" She professed scant respect for gray hairs, propriety, or convention. At times her lack of decorum caused the prim little Miss Barker to raise her eyes in holy solicitude as she wondered:

"Where will the child end?"

Of all the boys in Cedarville, Billy and Fred Harmon stood highest in the graces of Miss Barker. Naturally, they were the

first to meet Evelyn Champe. One evening they were invited to supper, and while Fred carried on a heavy conversation with Miss Jane, Billy indulged in a swift play of words with Evelyn.

She had spent two years and a considerable portion of her deceased father's insurance policy in Boston. There she had succeeded in gathering into her light head a smattering of vocal knowledge, and a heap of rubbish concerning the true sphere of woman, free thinking, advanced thinking, modern thinking, ultra-modern thinking—in fact, all kinds of thinking but real thinking.

The smattering of vocal knowledge proved an asset at social functions, and the assortment of modes of thinking made for smart conversation. A disastrous but fleeting affair of the heart—in which featured a long-haired itinerant violinist, who had three hale and hearty wives—gave to smart conversation the exact amount of cynicism to indicate true worldliness.

Billy proved a fencer worthy of Evelyn's mettle. He nimbly met and parried her swift thrusts, while his rapier strokes of repartee forced her to give ground. As they passed from the dining-room at the conclusion of the meal, Evelyn appraised this young man anew. She recognized in him a youth of parts. A hitherto bored interest in Cedarville and Cedarville people became quickened.

When they reached the parlor, Billy went to the piano. After a few flourishes he struck a chord and began to sing. Evelyn sat entranced as he interpreted a love-song in his best John McCormack manner, while Miss Jane, perched on the edge of a chair, dabbed at her tear-filled eyes with a lace handkerchief. Fred sat stolidly to himself and blinked his mild blue optics.

Nor did Billy conclude the performance with song. Before he departed, he dashed off a little sketch which bore a slight but distinctly flattering resemblance to Evelyn.

The next night Billy paid his party call. During the course of the evening he read to Evelyn from one of his manuscripts. When he had finished, she sighed gently.

"It ended so sadly," she murmured.

"That is life," he said in low, solemn tones.

"You're a genius!" she breathed.

Further personalities were prevented by the appearance of Fred Harmon at the front gate.

"Hi, folks!" he called. "I was passing by when I heard you talking, and I thought I'd stop in."

He came in and sat down on the top step; and from that point the conversation drifted idly.

Fred and Billy departed together. Later they stood at Fred's gate for a moment before they separated.

"Say, Billy," Fred said, as the latter started away, "she—she's nice, isn't she?"

Billy nodded and walked on.

Indeed, Billy found this young creature with blue eyes and silky blond hair a most interesting and agreeable person. Her smart talk reacted on his own imaginative faculties like old wine on sluggish blood; but he did not consider his interest in her the least personal. Oh, no!

"She is the only person in Cedarville I can really talk with. She—she understands me."

This was said to John Fox. That worthy removed the ancient pipe from between his tobacco-stained teeth, and spat. Then he resumed his smoking and turned to his typewriter without a word.

Billy left the office in disgust; nor did his ill-humor abate when he learned that Fred had an engagement with Evelyn for that night. Had he known what a determined purpose lay in Fred's heart as he entered the front gate of Miss Jane Barker's home, his peace of mind would indeed have been destroyed.

Singleness of purpose was a leading trait of Fred's character. When he saw a thing he wanted, he believed in going straight after it, and that as quickly as possible. He had become enamored of Evelyn Champe, and in his faltering manner he told her about it.

"I—I like you, Evelyn," he said. "I've got a pretty good job at the bank, and it won't be long before I get promoted. If—if you like me well enough to wait—"

"Really, Fred," she exclaimed, "I believe you're trying to propose to me!"

"Well, I reckon that's what you might call it."

"You sound as if you want to say it and are afraid to. Go ahead! Even if I don't accept you, I won't bite."

"Aw, Evelyn!"

"I think the moon went to your head, Fred. Do you know you almost asked me to marry you? You'd have been in a fix if I'd said yes, wouldn't you?"

"Well, why don't you? I—"

"Why, Fred! I believe you're in earnest!"

"I'm game!"

Then she laughed.

"I like you, Fred," she said; "but don't imagine that I'm going to settle down forever in this nine-thirty town. Not me!"

V

THE next day Fred mournfully told Billy of the unfortunate conclusion of his suit. Billy looked him over calmly.

"You poor boob!" he exclaimed.

Fred blinked his eyes pathetically and walked away.

The swift termination of his friend's aspirations furnished Billy with a topic of conversation that night. He had scarcely seated himself in the swing beside Evelyn when he brought up the subject.

"Oh, Fred's all right," she said with a faint suggestion of a shrug; "but—he is just like all the rest of them." Billy waited silently during the slight pause before she continued. "Now you—well, you're different. You think of a girl as an intellectual ego, and not as a big baby with nothing but a sweet tooth in her head."

Ye males! You who are invulnerable against the perfumed breath and liquid eyes of the white-shouldered vampire, beware lest your Achillean heel be pricked by the honeyed barb of the woman who says you are different!

Billy preened himself.

"It's good to talk to some one occasionally," he said, "who has an appreciation for things above and beyond the mere material—er—"

She came swiftly to his rescue.

"I know what you mean," she flashed.

"Most people are so—so gross."

"Yes! Take Fred, for instance. All he thinks about is banking. He never gets an inch away from the material side of things."

"Do you know, people as a whole do very little thinking, anyhow?" Evelyn said.

"That's true," Billy agreed. "I see crowds of people on the streets; I see them in the hotels, in the theaters, at their work, and at their play, and I often wonder just what they're all thinking about. I wonder what their minds are busy with."

"Yes," she murmured. "I wonder, too."

"The majority of them," he orated, "are like cattle, it seems to me—trudging along

in the same rut, thinking of nothing but the satisfaction of mere physical desires."

"The majority of people are so ordinary—so average," she said.

"This town is an example," he agreed. "The men get up in the morning, and the first thing they think about is breakfast. Then they go down-town and struggle along to rake in a few dollars. At noon they knock off for an hour, to get dinner; then they go back and struggle until five o'clock. They go home again, eat supper, play with the baby awhile, and go to bed, so that they can get up early the next morning and start again."

"Think of it!" she exclaimed.

"I don't believe I could stand that, day in and day out, for the rest of my life. Now there's Fred Harmon. When he gets to be thirty, he'll still be in the bank, making more money, maybe, but still grubbing along. When he gets to forty, he'll be cashier of the bank, and before he dies he may be president. He will marry before long, and settle down to rear a house full of children. He and his wife will get fat and comfortable and—that's all."

"How I loathe the thought of settling down and raising children and getting fat and everything! I don't believe I'll ever marry. I'm not built that way."

"Nor I," he returned. "It gives me the shivers to think of it—a bunch of squalling, dirty children, and the same old curl-papers and cold cream behind the coffee-pot every morning!"

"I don't believe I could be true to a man, anyhow," she reflected. "I *must* be entertained. Even if I should marry, my husband would probably cease to be interesting about the time he quit shaving every day and began to let his trousers bag at the knees. Then some one would come along who could interest me, and—there I'd be!"

"Marriage is not for me, either," he said blithely. "I want to be free—unfettered, so that my temperament can respond to each new thrill."

"I can't think of you as married," she mused softly. "I can't think of you in business. Your spirit appeals to me as such a free one—unbound by the conventions of dull routine."

He laughed appreciatively.

"How would I look as president of a bank? Or as a grocer, or a real-estate man?" he asked lightly.

"Ugh!"

"But," he said after a pause, and in a voice lowered to an appropriately sober pitch, "I suppose something like that will be my end. I shall go into business like the rest of the common herd, and marry and settle down and get fat. When I want a touch of excitement, I'll herd the kids together and take 'em to a movie, and dissipate afterward by eating a nut sundae and staying up till ten o'clock. I reckon that's what the Lord put us here for—to rear children and be good, substantial citizens."

"No!" protested Evelyn. "You won't do that—you won't be that! You couldn't. You're too clever, too brilliant, to settle down to a prosy life like that. You're a genius, Billy!"

"Oh, I don't know," he returned.

"You are! You can write, you can draw, you can sing. You have good looks and a magnetic personality." Her blue eyes grew dark in her emotion. "Why do you stay here?" she asked.

"Reckon I will be hitting the trail one of these days," he mumbled.

"Well, you can bet I'm not going to stay here in this slow-poky town the rest of my life!" she blazed. "I can sing, and I can dance, and any time I want to I can sign a contract with Keith. You just bet little Evelyn's not going to hang around the town pump forever. I don't care what Aunt Jane says!"

"When are you going to break loose?" he asked curiously.

"Er—well, I don't know exactly, but pretty soon. I'm going to spread my wings among the bright lights. I wasn't intended to sit around this place like a knot on a log!"

"I guess neither of us was made for Cedarville life," he remarked. "I feel discontented all the time. I wouldn't be here now if it weren't for—"

"For what?" she asked eagerly.

"For you, Evelyn," he said softly.

"Oh, I love the way your hair waves!" she murmured.

"I reckon I'll be stepping out into something big before long," he said. "No use sticking in this town—it's too small."

"I always feel like mussing it up so I can smooth it back again!"

"I don't want to brag, of course, but I'm foolish to stay around here, with my talents and everything."

"I love that dimple in your chin!" she cooed.

"I—I reckon I'm a sort of genius, and—"

"You're a darling!"

There was a deep silence, followed by a whispered—

"Not so loud, Billy! Aunt Jane might hear."

"Old Fox knows the *Chronicle* wants me. I'm going to make him come across with thirty a week."

"We needn't have a cook. I love to work in the kitchen. I can make the most delicious salad!"

"I know where we can get a little house on easy payments—that little place on Cherry Street."

"The one with the rose-bushes in the yard? Oh, Billy!"

VI

BILLY BRYAN, portly of frame and with thinning hair, but withal ruddy of cheek and twinkling of eye, sat in conversation with a business visitor. The visitor, Sanders by name, was the traveling representative of a concern whose business it was to manufacture and sell supplies to printing-establishments. Having concluded a sale of sizable proportions, Sanders evinced a genial desire to speak a complimentary word before departing.

"You have a mighty nice plant here, Mr. Bryan," he said. "The *Herald* was nothing but a junk-shop before you took hold of it."

"Yes, I've built up a pretty nice little office," was the modest reply.

"You deserve a lot of credit."

"For a lot of hard work—yes."

Sanders later called on the publisher of the *Chronicle*. Finding that gentleman not minded to buy, he remarked as he arose to leave:

"Say, that fellow Bryan over at the *Herald* is a pretty clever chap, don't you think?"

"Aw, he's just an average sort of guy!"

Evelyn, comfortably plump, but bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked, rocked softly back and forth as she turned the pages of a magazine. Her eldest child, a boy of fifteen, sat quietly making pencil sketches of his father, who lounged contentedly on the couch in ragged carpet slippers and baggy smoking-jacket. The other two children were in another room, in bed.

Evelyn glanced up at the boy.

"William," she said, "if that's all you have to do, go on to bed. You ought to study your books more instead of drawing pictures all the time!"

Evelyn resumed her magazine.

"H-m!" she exclaimed suddenly. "Here is an article on banking by Fred Harmon. You remember Fred, don't you?—used to work in the bank here. He must be right prominent."

"Yes," Billy answered. "He's a high official in a bank in St. Louis, now. Fred's a genius," he added absently. "By golly, it's nearly ten o'clock—reckon I'll be hittin' the hay!"

WHEN I SHALL FALL ASLEEP

WHEN I shall fall asleep and leave you sitting
Quiet and saddened by the little stone
That marks my place and time of earthly quitting,
I would not wish to think you were alone.

In the familiar commonplace of living
Let me be with you as in days of yore,
Solace and strength and comradeship be giving
Out of the richness of love's priceless store.

And in those works which daily served to bind you
So closely to me with the passing years
May your high heart keep brave, that night may find you
Not overcome with loneliness or fears!

F. L. Montgomery

Pent-Up Waters

HOW A STREAM OF DESTINY FLOWED ON THROUGH MANY GENERATIONS

By Jack Bechdolt

THE stream had its beginnings when receding glaciers left the foundation rock of the island scoured deep and filled the scourings with their melting ice. It was there when the red men came to trade and powwow, following their trails through the oak-groves and wild grape tangles. It welcomed Asa Fram and Jeph Butler, who crossed the Atlantic in a chicken-coop of a sailing-ship to seek fortune in the New World. It flows there to-day, under the stones and under the asphalt, out of sight, forgotten, but unconquered. Nothing has choked its well-spring, or seems likely to. Quite possibly it will flow on after the city is dust and forgotten, until God names the hour for its final drought.

Jeph Butler and Asa Fram each brought his wife to Manhattan before the posts of the stockade along Wall Street rotted from the memory of man. Sturdy settlers, they took adjoining farms along the stream, half-way up the west side of the island.

Butler was tow-headed, thick-set, indefatigable, born with a deep, abiding love of the land. Fram was more than six feet tall, lean, wiry, with the knack of using his head. He too had been born a farmer, but he had always delighted in mechanical contraptions.

Aboard ship the families became acquainted. Common vicissitudes and dangers brought them into a close intimacy that continued for years, during which Asa Fram's boy, John, grew to manhood and Butler's girl, Alice, ceased to run bare-legged through the fields and began to devote her attention to bright ribbons and young men.

During these years the farms increased all about them. Stages and private coaches with servants in attendance thronged the

Post Road. Other roads evolved from the old trails. Thickets of oak and tangles of wild grape became scarcer, and all the available land was put under cultivation.

One day, about the time when both families smilingly predicted that John Fram would soon be getting himself a farm and building a home for Alice Butler, John's father came to Jeph Butler with great news. Fram's shrewd gray eyes were twinkling.

"Friend Jeph, I am set to build me a mill to grind corn. No more tilling for me! My fields are small and ill nourished. Let those who have the rich land bring forth its fruits—I'll take my profits from the grist. This summer I begin to dam the stream to make my mill-pond."

Jeph Butler listened soberly. He did his best to dissuade Fram from this new project. He argued that Asa should till the soil, as his father and grandfather had done before him. A mill was a chance speculation. Already there was another grist-mill. Fram would bring ruin on himself and his children.

Fram was obdurate. His mind was made up to build the mill, and nothing could keep him from starting the dam.

"Neighbor Asa," said Butler, deadly serious, "I entreat in all earnestness that you will not dam our stream. I am below you, and your dam will impair my water. Your mill will send out the current soiled and dirty, diverted from its natural course, unfit for my drinking, poisonous to my land. What you purpose to do may profit you; it will be my ruin!"

"A man must think of his own interests," Fram replied, equally serious. "Your fields are rich, but mine are poor. I can't live by my husbandry; I must find another way. Sore that I am to go against your wish, I must dam the stream."

Jeph Butler, in a sudden passion that dyed his face crimson, thumped his walking-stick on the ground and shouted:

"You sha'n't! I forbid it. The law will forbid it. I give you warning, I'll consult a solicitor. No man shall damage my land or take the food from my mouth. Build that dam—as much as begin it—and I'll ruin you!"

"I shall build the dam," Fram replied quietly. He met Butler's angry glance steadily, with eyes that were steely gray. "God willing, I'll build that dam, and neither you nor any man shall stop me!"

Jeph Butler saddled his horse and rode down the country road into the town and to his solicitor's, in an office fronting on the Battery, not far from the old Dutch fort. Asa Fram and his men began the foundations for a timber dam across the little stream.

Neighborliness between the two families ceased abruptly. When the men met in the road, they did not speak. Only Alice Butler and John Fram continued on intimate terms, managing their occasional meetings in the fields, along the banks of the stream. They laughed and said their elders would recover from their silly humors. They were young and in love, and nothing else mattered.

Jeph Butler lost his lawsuit. The law declared that God had put the stream on the land for men to use, and a grist-mill shared equal rights with the farm. The timber dam, low and strong, was completed. The water was ready to turn into the new mill-pond.

"By God and all His angels, I vowed he should not use my stream, and I'll keep that vow!" Butler swore.

In the dusk he went to Asa Fram's new dam, accompanied by a man who carried a keg of powder. They placed the keg in the timber work and laid a fuse. Butler himself was striking the flint to fire the charge when Asa Fram's heavy hand brought him to his feet.

Butler was a full-blooded man. His passion, and his exertion in placing the keg of powder, had made his face purple. Perhaps the guilt on his conscience also had something to do with it. When Fram seized him by the shoulder he choked out an inarticulate word or two, tossed his hands in the air, half spun on his heel, and toppled over in an apoplectic fit.

Asa Fram and Butler's own man, aided

by young John Fram, carried Butler home—the last time a Fram crossed the Butler threshold. Within forty-eight hours Butler died of his anger and apoplexy.

A month after Jeph Butler was buried in the yard of St. Paul's chapel, on the outskirts of the growing town, his daughter met John Fram in the dusk. The girl's face was white and her eyes deep-hued with tragedy.

"I can never be your wife," she told young Fram; "never, if you waited a hundred years. There can never again be anything between the Frams and the Butlers. Your father killed mine—"

Fram interposed a hasty denial, but she burst out again.

"Yes, he killed him as surely as if he had struck him down. I will never marry the son of my father's murderer, even"—she choked, but hurried on truthfully—"even though I love him!"

John Fram pleaded with all his force and all his eloquence. What had they to do with the quarrel of their fathers? Why let that wreck their happiness? Let them go away, into the newer, better lands of the Ohio, forgetting the past in their happiness.

Alice shook her head.

Then let them stay and undo the mischief their fathers had done. Fram spoke of his father's growing age, argued that soon the grist-mill would be his. He would tear out the dam, restore the old course of the stream, and make it all up to the Butlers.

Alice still shook her head with the terrible, gentle stubbornness that loved him and denied him in the same breath. It was their last minute together in this life, and both realized it. In desperate appeal Fram burst out:

"I'll tear down the dam! I'll burn the mill! Let the stream flow as God meant it to, but don't let it part us! Alice!"

"Good-by," said Alice Butler softly, and went away in the thickening shadows.

Asa Fram died during the next year. His son sold out his land and went into the new frontier country of Ohio.

In time Alice Butler, to please her widowed mother, married a neighboring farmer. They acquired more land and passed on to their children an heritage of property already becoming valuable because of the constant northward growth of the city.

As for the dam, it disappeared in time, and the stream went to its normal course.

It was known for years to come when gardens were built along its banks. In time it was covered over by the great city and forgotten; but it did not die.

II

IN an apartment on Park Avenue where the yearly rental cost the salary of a bank president, Peter Fiske sat in the breakfast-room opposite his wife and heard a story that made him frown anxiously.

"The idea is entirely ridiculous!" he said. "The sooner Alice understands that, the better for her. It simply can't happen. It's our duty to see that it doesn't happen, as part of the promise we made Alice's father."

"But it has happened!" Mrs. Fiske insisted.

She was middle-aged, smartly groomed, a handsome woman. She would even have been beautiful, if constant habit had not compressed her lips to unusual thinness, accentuated the line of her chin and jaw, and killed the human warmth in her fine blue eyes.

"It has happened," she repeated, and her voice had a poorly suppressed quiver of anger. "They've met a number of times. Alice has lost her head about him. She told me last night after the opera, as calmly as you please, that she had made up her mind to marry him."

"Nonsense!" Fiske declared boldly. "Rubbish! She can't marry him, and there's an end to it." His sweeping gesture settled the question finally.

"Don't you be so sure!"

"I am sure. I'm Alice's guardian. She can't marry without my consent."

"Oh, can't she? If you want to see her married inside a week, you just tell her that! Alice Bleecker has all the Dutch stubbornness of the entire Bleecker family away back to Peter Stuyvesant's day. Just say 'can't' to her and see what happens!"

"It's all her father's fault," Fiske said gloomily. "Think of his insane notions about democracy, and the education she got—popular schools where she met all sorts of people, and social service work. It's just the same as putting fifteen million dollars in a sack at Fifth Avenue and Forty-Second Street with a sign on it, 'Help yourself.' He never could get the idea into his head that some responsibilities go with a fortune. Social service—"

"Yes, that's where she met this man—

some neighborhood betterment scheme," said Mrs. Fiske. "A young builder, with no money and nothing to build. It might as well be one of our chauffeurs!"

"We'll stop all that!"

"But diplomatically. Remember Alice—remember that Bleecker stubborn streak. We must be careful."

"My dear," said Fiske gravely, "for once I think you're right. We will be careful. In fact, I begin to see a way. A builder, is he?"

"So he says. He has no business—not even a start."

"And who is he?"

"Nobody. Some wild Westerner—from the Pacific Coast, I believe. Nobody ever heard of him."

"But his—name—"

"His name is Fram, if that means anything to you—John Fram. You'll meet him to-night; he's coming here to dine—at my invitation."

"Good! That's the idea! Be sure to treat him well. Let them have their own way, agree with all their plans. I'll talk to the fellow to-night. Perhaps I can slaughter him with a little kindness!"

There was a charming, informal little family dinner that evening in the home of Peter Fiske—just Alice Bleecker, the young man she loved, and her middle-aged aunt and uncle. Mrs. Fiske was simple and cordial in her best manner. Peter Fiske was bluff, red-faced, and very human. Alice glowed against the room's dark paneling—a slender, dark-haired young woman with gray eyes, whose health was her beauty, and a very rare beauty, too.

Alice Bleecker might have been any normal, well-educated girl with an income of two thousand dollars a year. Her aunt and uncle, for all their Park Avenue setting, were like two comfortable democratic foster parents. John Fram knew no more about Alice than that she was descended from a long line of Manhattanese, nor did he care. She was the woman he loved—that was enough. Rich or poor, he would love her just as much.

The young man who had appeared from nowhere—or, to be accurate, from Spokane, Washington—to menace the Bleecker millions proved to be quite presentable in every way. He was tall, lean, with a little premature gray in his hair; shrewd, and yet an audacious dreamer, with the am-

bitious idea of adding to New York's crowded sky-line more towers of his own construction.

When he had taken his leave, rather late, Peter Fiske carefully arranged a seemingly accidental encounter with his niece and ward.

"Interesting chap, that young Fram," he said. "Seems to have had quite a bit of experience of a practical sort. He's ambitious, too."

"I'm glad, I'm so glad you like him!" Alice cried, and added hastily: "But I knew you would like him!"

"Yes, I like him. Had quite a little talk with him after dinner. Asked him to call at my office to-morrow."

A pair of warm, velvet arms circled Fiske's neck, and his niece planted a warm kiss somewhere about the end of his Knickerbocker nose.

"You dear!" she said. "You're going to help John!"

"Well," said her uncle, "I'm going to see what we can do. He wants to build buildings, it seems, but nobody seems to need him."

"He can do great things if he ever gets a chance. I know, for he has told me all about it! I say it's a downright shame nobody will give him an opportunity. If I had my way with my own money, I'd give him a skyscraper to build to-morrow! He could make that Woolworth affair look silly!"

"Well, the fact is," her uncle said dryly, "we're out of skyscrapers to build just now, but there does happen to be an apartment-house—a smallish one, really part of your property—that the Manhattan Company is handling. I thought if he shows ability, and can prove some of the things he says, I might give him a chance to figure on it."

Alice Bleeker answered with another rapturous embrace, which left her uncle looking after her with a smile and a sigh.

"I almost hate to do it," he told his wife, later, "but it has to be done. A fortune like hers must be protected. Money is a responsibility—you might say a sort of solemn duty to the nation. Money must mate with money."

"Good gracious, yes!" Mrs. Fiske cried irritably. "And there's the child's position in society—we have that to consider, haven't we?"

In course of reasonable time John Fram, who came from nowhere, and who had only

a small capital, together with some years' practical experience in building for other men in the West, entered into a contract with the Manhattan Company to build a twelve-story apartment-house on four lots midway of the island. The site was in a neighborhood rapidly changing from mid-Victorian village to modern apartment homes because of a new subway. A twelve-story building there promised to be quite a landmark. It might not bring as much wealth and fame as a skyscraper, but it would help a young builder a long way on his road to success.

John Fram did not know that Peter Fiske was directly responsible for his bid winning against a dozen others. He did not know what only Peter Fiske knew about this particular property, and Peter Fiske did not tell him.

Fram thought, with great jubilation, that he was galloping on to a coveted goal. Fiske knew that in all probability the young builder was headed for bankruptcy and absolute ruin. As a man, Fiske hated to do it. As the legally appointed guardian of a girl with a large fortune, morally bound by his promise to Alice's dead father, he considered it his solemn duty to crush John Fram.

"When the job is done I'll be a made man," John told Alice; "and it's going to be done just as sure as I live. I'll be pretty well paid, too, Alice. The contract isn't half bad for profits—more than I dared expect. And then, Alice, I'll have enough for us to marry! I'll have enough to support my wife decently—of course, not as grandly as your aunt and uncle live, but in a jolly little apartment somewhere, where we can get rich together without too much risk. When it's done, Alice, will you take me and my career?"

"Of course I will!" said Alice Bleeker. "John, I'll marry you now, if you say the word!"

"No," Fram answered firmly. "A man hasn't any business marrying until he can give his wife at least as good as she's been used to."

He wondered why Alice smiled in that queer way.

III

For almost a hundred years a ramshackle wooden shed used by a blacksmith had stood on the property. Artists delighted in its picturesqueness, and writers spoke

of its quaint village charm, lingering in modern New York.

A few days after the building contract was signed, the smith, whose father and grandfather shod horses there, beat out his last iron shoe and sent forth his last plodding draft-horse. The broken wagons and rusty piles of junk were hauled out of the yard, and a gang of wreckers made short work of the timber shed.

Then came a steam-shovel, lumbering ponderously, and an attendant train of labor. The shovel was blocked into place, word was given that all was ready, and the donkey-engine started. Gears clashed and big iron jaws crunched into earth that had accumulated and packed there for more than a century.

In the little crowd that stood outside the rail to watch the steam monster begin its meal was Alice Bleeker, incongruously smart among the loafers. John Fram, watching the first performance of his lumbering pet with all a father's pride when baby takes his first step, looked up and caught her waving handkerchief. Across the space of beaten, cluttered earth their eyes met and exchanged a message, and the soiled and sordid place bloomed like a garden of roses for them.

In the evening of that glorious and eventful day Fram stole an hour from all his work and responsibilities to spend with Alice Bleeker.

"Do you know," he said to her, wrinkling his forehead as the thought puzzled him, "I got a funny notion to-day, just as the shovel began work and you stood out there waving to me! I had the queer feeling one sometimes gets of having done that very thing before—the odd sensation of having been in that very place, of having seen you and waving to you, long, long ago. I remembered the way the sun felt on the back of my neck, and the smell of the earth turned up, and how I looked up quickly and caught sight of you waving a handkerchief. Time and eternity were all muddled up, and it seemed as if you and I had always been there, looking at each other and loving each other."

"I know," Alice said earnestly. "I know! Because I felt that way too. I have always felt that way when I go with you to watch the work—just as if there was something about the place that was a part of us." Her serious, thoughtful look changed. She smiled. "I know! It's en-

chanted ground. Your steam-shovel's going to dig up the pot of gold!"

Presently the steam-shovel did dig up something which was not earth, but was far from being a pot of gold. The shovel's iron jaw broke open Pandora's box and loosed all the fabled furies upon John Fram.

The foundation excavations were nearing completion, and they had begun to pour concrete piers on a part of the plot when the steam-shovel struck water. Moist spots, at first attributed to seepage from leaking pipes, proved to be quicksand, seemingly without bottom.

Presently a flow began. The foundation hole flooded, and work partly done went to ruin.

The Manhattan Company had sunk test-holes on its land. John Fram relied on the company's information when he estimated costs and entered his bid. Only Peter Fiske knew all about those test-holes, and he told only what, in full realization of his manifold responsibilities, he considered wise. For a number of years Peter Fiske fully understood why a blacksmith's shop had been permitted to stand on property of much greater potential value.

The steam-shovel was taken away. A powerful electric pump was installed, and day and night a stream of muddy water came out of the hole and went into the city sewers. With every gallon that flowed away went a part of John Fram's estimated profits. In two weeks he seemed to age twenty years.

"If it's an old pond, even a sizable one," Fram explained to Alice, "we'll have it pumped out in a couple of weeks more. Even if it takes a month, I can stand that much. I could still afford the expense and get the building up; but if it's a stream—one of those old streams that start from springs—we might keep pumping until I'm as old as Methuselah, and it wouldn't do any good. If the job was big enough, caissons might be sunk and the piers fastened to bed-rock; but the job isn't big enough, and I can't afford it. As it is, Alice, those pretty profits we were counting on are all gone for pumping and delays and damages. I'm afraid our plans will have to wait!"

Fram tempered his news with a smile—a brave, apologetic smile; and she saw by his smile how bitterly he was hurt.

"It's a shame, a rotten shame!" she exclaimed. "I'm going to talk to Uncle Pe-

ter and make him pay for this. As if it was your fault! As if you knew there was water where he wants his silly apartment-house! I'll make him pay."

"No!" Fram became decisive. "You'll not talk to Uncle Peter, not a word—not if you love me," he said. "The responsibility is mine. I undertook the contract. Possibly, if I sued long enough and hard enough, I could make the Manhattan Company stand their share of the added expense; but I can't sue. Frankly, I can't afford it. My credit is mortgaged to the last cent. Alice, I won't have this made a personal matter with Uncle Peter. I'll stand or fall by my own efforts!"

"Then quit," Alice urged. "Quit now, before the job ruins you. They can't make you go on."

"Perhaps not—legally; but that isn't the only side of it. I came here to succeed. This is my first job, my chance to show what I can do. If I can't swing this thing—if I quit—I'm through. I'll never get another chance!"

"Oh, my dear!" cried Alice. "What can you do?"

"I can scrap it out," Fram said, grinning with eyes that were tragic. "I can scrap it out. I've got to—until I win or that stream kills me."

"But, John—our plans—"

"Dear, our plans will have to wait on my work."

Looking at him, studying him, Alice Bleecker realized that this man had his own problem to settle in his own way. She realized that and respected him, but she broke out, suddenly petulant:

"Oh, bother the old stream!"

She had no sooner said it than they exchanged a curious mutual stare and shared once more that odd sensation of repetitive living, of having said all this and felt all this before.

"Odd!" Fram exclaimed. "It's mighty queer!"

IV

PETER FISKE's plan to kill with kindness worked with efficient smoothness. It brought a lingering death with extreme mental torture.

Day and night the pumps kept up their monotonous chant, and the stream, old as the island and ever renewed by its deep springs, flowed out in a torrent of dirty water. The rest of the foundation was

built. Where the soft ground lay nothing could be done.

Building stopped. Sub-contractors, seeing how matters stood, quit Fram in a panic. The old current, finding a new and faster outlet, disturbed ground in the neighborhood, and the walls of other buildings settled, cracked, and fell. Their owners, of course, began lawsuits against John Fram, the contractor.

John Fram sat in his little office before a desk littered deep with papers of all sorts. He had been trying to check up his accounts, to discover how he stood finally in the hour of his failure. He gave it up and sank his head in his hands, relaxed finally, broken by defeat.

That afternoon he had notified the Manhattan Company that he intended to forfeit his building contract. Mentally and physically he was too wearied to care. He only wanted to forget. That was the way Alice Bleecker found him.

She entered the shed-like room unsuspected. He had not heard her quiet motor stop outside. When she spoke to him, he responded dully, without surprise, too tired to care how she had come, or why.

"John! Uncle Peter just told me that you—you are quitting the contract!"

He nodded, silent.

"My dear! John, I am sorry!"

Her impulsive caress passed unnoticed.

"What will you do?" she demanded.

"What will you do now?"

"Why, I'm going to quit. The water whipped me," Fram said, as if that explained all.

"But what will you do?"

"Do? I think that I—I'll go away somewhere."

"Go away—without me? John, our plans—our marriage—"

Fram rose slowly and faced her.

"Of course, you understand," he said a little thickly, "all that—that is quite out of the question now."

"You mean you won't—we can't—"

"It may take years to come back, Alice. I won't—I can't ask you to wait."

"John! John dear, listen!" Alice shook him, clinging to his shoulders, emphasizing her words, demanding his attention by her nearness. "I have money, John—lots of money, more than both of us need. We won't wait—not another day. We'll be married now—to-night!"

Fram shook his head.

"We shall never be married," he said.
 "We will!" Alice Bleecker cried, trying to force her will upon him, though she knew it was no use. "John! You said you loved me. Forget your failure, turn your back on it all. Let the old stream flow as God meant it, but don't let this part us! John—"

Again that odd flash of unreality, of repetition—a sense of life like a continuous current, linking past and present! It halted Alice Bleecker's words. It roused Fram from his despair. Their eyes met and stared.

The second-hand of the cheap clock on the office wall went its round once, then twice. The air was overcharged with something electric. Then Fram spoke quietly, the old-time ring restored to his voice, the old light in his eye.

"That's it!" he said. "I knew there was a way—and you found it! We will let it flow as God meant it to. It's not too late to save the wreck!"

Alice was staring.

"I don't understand! You said—"

"I was saying, dear, that I have found the way out. The stream, this stream that I've been trying to pump dry—well, why pump it dry? I won't. I'll let it flow—let it flow through a big concrete drain—gather it all back into its original current and

let it flow on, through the building, out of sight down under the basement floor, under the streets into the sewers, where it never again can hurt anybody!"

He stopped, then added solemnly:

"Alice! Something wonderful happened just now—something like a miracle. I—I don't know just how it happened, or why, but I do know you brought it here—and it saved us both!"

John Fram finished the apartment-house for the Manhattan Company. He lost money on the contract—more money than he could possibly have afforded had not the reputation that his success brought him led to other good contracts. The first thing he did when the building was done and the old stream out of sight and memory was to marry Alice Bleecker despite her uncle and aunt, and despite the fortune he did not then know she owned.

An interesting thing happened while workmen were building the drain that carries the old stream safely under the new walls. They dug up an odd find—a length of heavy oak timber, fitted with old oak pegs, a piece of some forgotten structure. Buried so deep, it aroused some speculation. John Fram, who examined the find, suggested that it might once have been part of a stout timber dam.

LOVE'S RELICS

THIS is all that is left—this letter and this rose!
 And do you, poor dreaming things, for a moment suppose
 That your little fire shall burn for ever and ever on,
 And this great fire be all but these ashes gone?

Flower! Of course she is—but is she the only flower?
 She must vanish, like all the rest, at the funeral hour;
 And you that love her, with brag of your all-conquering thew,
 What, in the eyes of the gods, tall though you be, are you?

You and she are no more—yea, a little less than we—
 And what is left of our loving is little enough to see;
 Sweet the relics thereof—a rose, a letter, a glove—
 That, in the end, is all that remains of the mightiest love.

Six-foot-two is no height—for Death is taller than he;
 And Death gathers every minute flowers as fair as she;
 And nothing you two can do, or plan, or purpose, or dream,
 But will go the way of the wind and go the way of the stream.

Wilfred West

Vengeance Is Fine

THE STORY OF A REJECTED SUITOR'S RELENTLESS RESOLUTION

By John Holden

WHEN Johnny Gilsey told me that his life was dedicated to vengeance, I was startled. You see, Johnny wasn't the sort of chap that you naturally associate with vengeance, any more than you associate golf with goldfish or angels with artichokes. He looked just what his name sounds like—a rather under-sized, good-natured chap, likable but not overly aggressive, with a guileless round face and honest eyes that looked incapable of harboring deadly designs against any one.

Still, you can't always tell a man's mental make-up by his appearance; and the fact that Johnny had quit a dinky office job in St. Paul to go homesteading in Wyoming should have warned us older settlers that, like an artesian well, he was deeper than he looked.

As I say, Johnny was as ordinary as sage-brush on casual acquaintance; but after you learned about his love-affair back in St. Paul you could see that he was a blighted being. It was recognizable, too, by the queer way in which he decorated his shack.

In Wyoming the ordinary young bachelor homesteader beautifies his dwelling with pictures of girls. Almost invariably these boys have got tangled up with the sex to the extent of holding hands, anyhow; and, living alone that way, they just naturally get lonesome for the critters. Why, I've seen homesteaders' shacks that were plastered with girls' pictures thicker than cigar-bands on a home-made ash-tray—girls the boys had known; girls they hoped to know; girls, like Ethel Barrymore and Mary Pickford, that they had no more idea of knowing than they had of wearing sombreros, as the motion-picture homesteaders always do.

But never a feminine face did duty as wall-paper in Johnny Gilsey's cabin. Not

that he didn't have his pine-board walls covered with pictures, because he did; but they were pictures so utterly out of keeping with a homesteader's usual notion of art that when you looked at them, and from them to Johnny's ragged shirt and I-don't-care trousers, you'd sort of doubt his sanity.

One Saturday night, after we had returned together from our weekly square meal at Sunburst—so named because it's the gloomiest village in the cow country—I asked Johnny about those pictures. Perhaps because I am a lily-fingered clerk turned hard-boiled homesteader, like Johnny himself, he told me.

"Those pictures there," he said with the proud wave of a connoisseur toward a group of magazine cuts behind the stove, "represent the kind of man I'm going to be some day."

I sized up that particular group of prints more carefully. They represented men in full evening dress, being distinguished thereby from the group beside the cracked mirror, which showed only dinner-jacketed gentlemen, and from the cluster flanking the wash-basin, which depicted graceful guys in all the glory of morning coats and derby hats. They sure were a genteel lot, those pictured chaps, standing as they did in nonchalant and condescending attitudes, with here and there an awestruck female in the background. Johnny Gilsey resembled them just as much as a carved coconut resembles a bronze Mercury.

"What's the idea?" I asked when I had mastered my surprise. "To become a Fifth Avenue fashion-plate is an unusual ambition for a homesteader, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I'm an unusual homesteader." Johnny gazed sadly out of his one-sash window. "I had a girl once," he added in a hushed and reverend voice; and I could see, plain as ink on a shirt-front, that

girls and dress-suits were closely associated in his mind.

"Oh!" I said; then, realizing that he hadn't uttered such a mouthful after all: "Still, lots of guys have had girls. Was there anything extraordinary about yours?"

"She threw me down."

After a moment's thought and a long look at Johnny's homely countenance I could readily see that a girl might have grounds for such action. But I didn't want to hurt Johnny's feelings, so I said:

"How came she to make a mistake like that?"

Then he told me.

"It all commenced when Rufus Shoop got a job as a plumber," he stated. "Shoop was an assistant bookkeeper, same as me, and we both had a crush on Gertrude. She kept telling us in a playful sort of way that no mere pen-pusher could ever fill in her name on a marriage-license; but I didn't pay much attention, because I knew she liked me better than Shoop. Besides, I had just received a two-dollar-a-week raise. Then, one evening, this Shoop fellow appeared, all dressed up like a sore thumb, and bragging about his new job and the big money he earned every time he plumbed a bath-tub or cleaned a kitchen sink.

"I tried to tell Gertrude that Shoop was no gentleman, deserting a nice white-collar job to go messing around filthy pipes that way; but my lingo didn't seem to get across like it used to. Gertrude pointed out that Shoop acted just as gentlemanly toward her as he ever had; that the clothes he wore off duty were better than mine; that what he wore while on duty affected her no more than did the price of ice in Iceland. All in all, I could see that my love-affair was approaching a crisis, as a story-writer would say. The show-down came when I took Gertrude to the firemen's ball and Shoop showed up in a dress-suit."

Johnny sighed and gazed reminiscently at his sartorial picture-gallery.

"Yes, sir, Shoop surely looked like a window display," he resumed sorrowfully. "He sort of made me feel foolish, too, on account of me claiming that plumbing was a wop job. Me, I wore the plain everyday suit that was all I could afford; and though it was good material, with a nifty green stripe on a brown background, it seemed to get Gertrude's goat that night worse than money in a bank gets an an-

archist's. She developed a perfect craze for dancing with Shoop's dress-suit; and on the way home I mentioned this. She didn't answer for a long time, and I was sort of regretting that I had been a bit rough on a nice little girl that loved me, when suddenly she began to say things.

"Not that her language wasn't polite and well-bred and all that, understand; but in about four minutes she let me know that as a go-getter in life I was a failure; that eighteen-dollar-a-week clerks compare with sixty-dollar-a-week plumbers like peanuts compare with pumpkins; that, while bookkeeping is nice, clean work, it doesn't take a girl to shows and cabarets like a job at soldering sewer-pipe does; that, for the sake of humanity in general and herself in particular, I'd better tell her good-by and pick myself an unambitious girl whose idea of a good time is limited to eating gum-drops and seeing side-street movies."

Following this somewhat remarkable confession—for hitherto Johnny had been about as confidential as a clam in a fish-dealer's window—there was a moment of embarrassed silence.

"It sounds like you had a bunch of hard luck," I sympathized. "But what's the connection between your Gertie girl and all your nifty pictures?"

Johnny flamed up like a Roman candle.

"'Gertie girl' sounds disrespectful," he snapped; and I could see that he hated the young lady just like a spender hates payday. "Gertrude talked straight from the shoulder, and I tell you that's something in these days of saying one thing and meaning another!"

I apologized and mentioned the pictures again.

"Well, the fact is," Johnny resumed, "she got me so mad that I took a solemn oath, right there on her door-step, that inside of one year I'd show up before her with more money than Shoop could make in two years, and, what's more, with more and finer clothes than any plumber ever dreamed of buying. Now you know why I'm studying up on what clothes to wear on all occasions; how to wear 'em properly, and so on."

"Sure I know," I stated. "You told her that when you beat Shoop at money-making—and taking up a homestead this way, with your two years of army service deducted from the three-year residence requirement, it sure looks like you can do it

—you would return to St. Paul and win her back."

Johnny's eyes flashed, and I got my second surprise of the evening.

"Like fun I did!" he exclaimed. "What sort of a mushy mutt do you think I am, anyway? What I told that young lady was that when I appeared before her again, with money like Rockefeller and duds like the Prince of Wales, she couldn't get me back no matter how much she tried; that I was done with her once and for all, finally and forever, for time and eternity; and that I was only going back at the end of a year to gloat over her and show her what a rotten picker she was when she ditched me for a dub like Shoop!"

II

ON my way home I gave a lot of thought to Johnny and his unholy lust for vengeance, and the more I thought about it the more concerned did I become. A grown man devoting most of his waking moments to thoughts of revenge didn't jibe with my notions of right and sane living, to say nothing of that peace and good-will toward fellow men and women that even homesteaders should cultivate. My Christian duty to sidetrack Johnny from the road to vengeance loomed large in my mind.

So next day I left off digging post-holes long enough to saunter over to his shack, which was about a mile from mine, and strive to make him see the light of reason.

"It's been proved time and again that thoughts of revenge don't do a lonesome chap any good," I expostulated. "It sours one's disposition, shuts out from one's mind an appreciation of the good things in life—the fresh air, the sunshine, and the freedom of this splendid homestead of yours, for instance—and is bound to convert even the most cheerful citizen into a confirmed grouch. The Bible says, 'Love your enemies.' Why don't you follow the Bible?"

"I do," came the prompt reply; "only I follow the part that says, 'Vengeance is fine.'"

"I guess what you know about the Bible could be written on a pinhead with a typewriter," I retorted. "The phrase you have in mind is 'Vengeance is mine.'"

"It 'll be mine, and it 'll be fine, too," said Johnny with firmness.

"But listen," I argued. "You don't figure on wearing a dress-suit again after

you've put the blight on Gertrude's young life, do you?"

"No; I'm going to live here as a regular rancher after I prove up. I don't care if I never see another dress-suit after I've seen Gertrude."

"Is vengeance worth the money you'll spend for a rig-out to wear only once?"

"It sure is!"

"But suppose you are unable to see her?"

"Oh, I'll see her all right!"

Johnny's jaw set like a prizefighter's when getting his picture taken.

"Positively nothing can get your mind off revenge?" I persisted.

"Nothing! I've made up my mind to gloat over that girl, and I wouldn't unmake it for all the land and live stock in Wyoming."

I saw that for the time being I was beaten; but only for the time being. It happens that I possess some determination myself; so, thinking of the dance that was to be held in Sunburst soon, I proceeded to town and called on Minerva Minns. If I could get Johnny to thinking about a new girl, it might help some.

In other and more chivalrous days this winsome little Minns lady would probably have been called the belle of the range, or something equally sonorous and respectful. In this movie-mad age, however, when the fair^{er} sex engages in activities ranging from plowing to politics, Minerva was known, simply and vulgarly, as the village vamp. She was a nifty little package, with her vivacity and fun-loving disposition. Weaned from her habit of wearing red velvet gowns, she could have made a hit anywhere.

She looked to me like a girl who could maybe save Johnny Gilsey from his in-growing idiocy; so I went straight to her place of business, in the Golden West Hotel, and got her in a good humor by fulsome praise of the prune pie she brought me.

"Minerva," I commenced, when I had succeeded in outsitting the other diners at her table, "would you do me a favor at the dance Saturday night?"

"Glad to," she answered. "Only I've promised dances to about thirty gents already, and I'm not sure there'll be that many numbers. I'd rather not have any fights over me, gun or fist. In fact, I've decided not to dance lady's choice with anybody, because if I favored one admirer all the rest would be sore."

"The favor I'm asking is that you'll dance lady's choice with a fellow who isn't an admirer at all; who is, in fact, known hereabouts as a woman-hater."

I made her acquainted with Johnny Gilsey's thirst for vengeance and my hope that, if she would temporarily divert his attention to her fascinating self, he might be cured of his unholy obsession. Minerva agreed, and at the dance she was as good as her word. She tripped lightly past men who would have given their best pony and saddle to be picked as her partner, and, in full sight and hearing of all, conferred that inestimable boon upon young John Jackass Gilsey.

Did the poor fish accept with alacrity and a glad light in his eyes? He did not. He stood gazing at the belle of two townships in the bored manner of a long-trousered youth watching a kid's game of marbles, and then he answered that he didn't wish to dance, and would she please excuse him?

However, I hoped that Johnny might still be saved from his folly, so with a new plan in mind I once more called at his shack.

"Johnny," I said, "do you realize that if it were not for your ex-girl, Gertrude, you would not be gaining title to six thousand dollars' worth of Uncle Sam's public land next month? That had she not jolted you out of your no-account job you'd still be plugging along at eighteen dollars a week?"

Johnny turned this new idea over in his mind.

"What of it?" he asked. "It only goes to show how a fellow can turn misfortune to good account."

"Ah! You *do* admit that Gertrude is responsible for your success? Then surely you'll give up that kiddish stunt of yours?"

"No; my success doesn't alter the fact that she threw me down for a plumber."

"But it was for your own good. Besides, she may not be going with the plumber any more."

"She isn't."

"Oh! You've been keeping tabs on her?"

"Not at all; mother merely happened to mention it in writing to me."

"I'll bet that Gertrude still loves you."

I could see by Johnny's expression that the same idea had occurred to him. His eyes softened for a moment, then glinted like rock crystal again.

"She loves my money, maybe."

"You're as stubborn as a sheep-herder," I told him.

"Not stubborn; merely determined. To get anywhere in life a fellow has to have determination."

"What about your love for her?"

Johnny flushed and looked foolish; but not for long.

"No girl can make a fool of me just because I once thought a lot of her," he said.

After a while Johnny let me see Gertrude's photograph, and I'll tell you I got a surprise. Not only was she as pretty as an actress on a magazine cover, but she looked as intelligent as a Congresswoman, too. Her eyes were soft and luring and yet sensible, if you know what I mean. She was the sort of girl, I judged, that had brains enough to know that a spineless suitor should be jolted into making something of himself, and compassion enough to be sorry she had jolted him. I felt encouraged to proceed with the rest of my plan.

"Johnny," I said, "a famous preacher is going to visit Sunburst next Sunday. Won't you, as a special favor, go with me to hear him speak?"

Johnny finally consented, and on the following Sunday we appeared bright and early at the Golden West Dance-Hall, where the Rev. Gilbert Gilgidden was scheduled to do two hours of soul-saving.

As luck would have it, the preacher's discourse was upon the folly of seeking vengeance. In language that would have moved a heart of stone, he pointed out the satisfaction to be derived from turning the other cheek for a second slap. The meek are destined to inherit the earth, including Wyoming, he said; the quality of mercy is not strained, but droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon a dry-farmer's wheat—and so on. It was great stuff.

To my intense gratification, Johnny Gilsey seemed to be taking it all in like a cub reporter at a murder trial. He sat up in his seat as straight as a West Point cadet; and I could see that the sermon was doing him good, for every now and then he sort of smiled to himself, as if he appreciated the preacher's points.

"Well, I guess the reverend put all that revenge nonsense out of your head," I remarked, as we walked out. "It was a fine sermon, wasn't it?"

"Was it?" queried Johnny. "Me, I didn't hear it. I never could stand that droning, singsongy tone that most preachers use."

"You didn't hear the sermon?" I gasped. "Then why did you sit so erect and watch the preacher so intently?"

"Because he was well-dressed, of course. Didn't you notice how well his frock coat fitted in the back, and how his trousers hung—narrow at the bottom, so they draped nicely over his instep, and wider at the knees, so that—"

III

WELL, after that I gave up my attempts to lure Johnny back to sanity for a period of nearly two months. It was not until he had secured title to his square mile of good grazing land, and had obtained a loan of three thousand dollars thereon at the First National Bank of Sunburst, that I felt it incumbent on me to make one last attempt to prevent him from squandering all his money on clothes.

I called again at his shack, noted that his library on etiquette had grown to five volumes and his clothing pictures to some five hundred, and tried to reopen the question diplomatically.

"Figuring on a trip back East?" I queried.

"Yep; the great moment is at hand," he said, gazing lovingly at his art gallery.

"Still got the notion that you want to humiliate that sensible girl who changed you from a small-salaried office clerk into a ranch-owner?"

"I sure aim to get square with the girl that threw me down for a plumber!" he said, his eyes flashing with all his erstwhile lust for vengeance.

It looked like I was playing a losing game, but I was not ready to surrender yet.

"I'm going to St. Paul next week with two car-loads of cattle," I remarked. "Why don't you go along with me and save carfare?"

Johnny looked dubious, having made up his mind to ride the cushions; but when I mentioned the monetary saving in terms of shirts and shoes, he capitulated.

"All right!" he said. "I wasn't meaning to dress up anyhow till I get there. Then I'll do it right." He rubbed his hands in gleeful anticipation. "First I'll get me a Turkish bath with all the trimmings—hair-cut, shampoo, manicure, mas-

sage, and the like. Then I'll climb into silk underwear and a morning coat like that one over there." He pointed a grimy finger at a picture behind the stovepipe. "With that as a starter, I'll go out and get busy. Dress-suit and dinner jacket, overcoat, top-hat, cane, spats, gloves—oh, boy! With everything in order, I'll loaf around for a while in the finest hotel in St. Paul; then, after sort of getting used to luxury, I'll saunter out.

"I don't know just how or when I'll meet Gertrude, but I think this would be about right—alight from a big touring-car in front of her house, in the evening, before she's had time to go out; walk up to her door, let her get a good look at my Fifth Avenue scenery, make a few biting remarks, wish her a long and unhappy life with her plodding plumber, bid her good evening, saunter away in a lordly manner, taking a cigarette from a gold holder and lighting it as I go; then enter my swell car and have the chauffeur drive me away with a lot of horn-honking. Some vengeance, man!" Johnny concluded, grinning all over his foolish face.

In due time I got my cattle-cars loaded, and Johnny and I set forth on our journey to St. Paul.

I could tell by the manner in which he passed up chances to flirt with village girls *en route* that every atom of his mental energy was focused upon his coming meeting with Gertrude.

"With all your threats, you love her still," I told him once.

"Maybe you're right," Johnny admitted; "but if you think I'm going to be soft with her on that account, you've got another think coming."

"She's probably in love with you, too," I insisted.

"That's what mother said in her last letter."

His cold-blooded manner was too much for my patience.

"You addle-pated idiot!" I bawled him out. "Have you the gall to tell me that, when you love her and she loves you, you'll still go on with your insane scheme to humiliate her for making a man of you?"

"Yep, I sure will!"

I cursed Johnny till I blistered my tongue, but it did no good.

"You can't do it!" I declared. "You talk big, but when that sweet little girl that made a success of you looks up into your

massaged face, and takes hold of your manicured hand, you'll weaken like a snow crust in a chinook. *That* for your ferocious intentions!" I snapped my fingers in his face. "I'll bet you a hundred dollars that when you appear before Gertrude in your monkey clothes you'll fall for her like a cat for cream, if she's fool enough to take you back!"

"Done!" cried Johnny, quick as a dime falling down a coal-hole. "By the Lord Harry, I said she can't win me back when I show up before her with wealth strewn all over me, and I'll back that determination to the last dollar my homestead is worth. I'll show you whether I'm a man of my word or a weak worm! Put up your coin!"

I did so—and almost immediately regretted my impetuous wager, because now it looked as though he would stick to his plan for vengeance to win my money if for no other reason.

IV

WE pulled into St. Paul at midnight, with nothing to do till morning but sleep. But do you suppose Johnny would sleep? Not a bit of it!

"Bill, old boy!" he cried, slapping me on the back. "I've just got to feast my eyes on some glad rags. Come on! The lights in some of the clothing-store windows will still be burning."

So we set off up-town in our cattle-handling clothes, looking several degrees worse than ordinary tramps, and not smelling like perfume-factory employees, either. Johnny, in particular, was a sight. His overalls were torn and caked with a combination of grease, cow-hair, and just plain dirt. His coat resembled a gunnysack, his hat looked as if it had been salvaged from the gutter after a bad storm, and he needed a shave almost as badly as he needed a bath.

"Even if I do meet an old friend, he'll never recognize me in this rig-out," he said.

I admitted that he was probably right; so we wandered about the deserted streets, from one shop window to another, like women with money coming due.

"That 'll be me to-morrow night," Johnny would say, as he pointed to a dress-suited dummy; or, "Should my shirt-front be pleated or just plain?" or, "I'll have to remember to get a diamond-studded watch and flash it on her." He kept making re-

marks like that till I could have caressed his head with a brick.

Even after an hour of midnight window-shopping Johnny was still unwilling to go to bed. So engrossed was he with his plan to dazzle his ex-sweetheart that he must needs walk past her house to get "the lay of the land," as he expressed it, so that he could plan his arrival in the car the following evening.

"I've sort of forgotten where her house stands in the block," he explained. "After waiting a whole year to make just the right impression on her, I can't afford to overlook any detail that will make my visit more impressive. The whole family went to bed long ago, so there's no chance that anybody will see me."

He was able to pick out Gertrude's residence quite easily, because one of the street arc-lamps was located in front of it. It was a frame house, and in the eery electric light that fizzed and spluttered in the weird silence of the night, it looked a bit frayed and run down.

"Her home!" he muttered reverently, and for a moment he seemed to forget his grim determination to have vengeance upon her; but only for a moment. "Guess when I get dolled up I'll show up in that house like a new silver dollar in a handful of pennies, eh?" he remarked.

I agreed that he would, and moved drearily on. I was getting tired of Johnny and his idiotic plan. Besides, I did not like to snoop around on a deserted street in the middle of the night.

"Let's cross the street and walk past her house," he suggested, and reluctantly I did so.

Johnny stood and looked up at a certain window, too much absorbed in his thoughts to notice an electric brougham that came gliding along as silently as a cat on a rubber floor.

But I noticed it. I saw an evening-gowned vision of feminine loveliness alight in front of that drab house, followed by a gentleman in correct evening dress—the sort of fellow that Johnny hoped to be after hours of bathing and barbering.

Then Johnny turned, having heard the new arrivals at last, and he and the girl were face to face.

She stopped, startled, and I could hear the gasping intake of her breath as she gazed upon the unbarbered features of the most disreputable-looking young man in

the city. Then, with a little choking cry, she literally threw herself at that dirty specimen of misgarbed manhood. She threw her daintily gloved arms around his hairy neck and kissed him.

"Johnny!" she cried. "Oh, my poor boy! Oh, I knew you'd never succeed out in that terrible Wyoming! I should never have let you go! I knew you'd return a tramp, without a dollar to your name, without a decent rag to your back! Oh, you must come in and let me cook you a meal—you look half-starved! And bring your companion in misfortune! Oh, Johnny, Johnny, why did I ever let you quit your nice bookkeeping job?"

With a few scant words she dismissed her immaculately clad escort, and then she fairly dragged poor, dumb-stricken Johnny and me inside.

Well, there is no need to go into the details of what followed; but after the wedding date was settled, and we were alone again, I couldn't resist the temptation to enjoy a good long laugh at Johnny Gilsey's expense.

"Aw, you poor fish, how could I go on hating her when she took me back after thinking I was down and out?" he retorted. "I'll tell you, girls like that don't grow on bushes. And I guess vengeance isn't so fine as I thought it would be, anyhow!"

In Pawn*

A SMALL-TOWN COMEDY DRAMA OF THE MIDDLE WEST

By Ellis Parker Butler

Author of "Pigs Is Pigs," "The Jack-Knife Man," etc.

XXI

HENRIETTA'S first act on awakening was to look for Lem. As she might have expected, the boy was gone.

Her next act was to look at her watch. She felt she must have slept until midday, so changed was her physical and mental condition since she threw herself on the bed. For some quite unaccountable reason, she felt tremendously strong and buoyant. For a few moments she could not grasp why she felt so; then she suddenly realized that her cheer of mind was due to the fact that Freeman, for the only time in years, was not a threatening menace, but was absolutely under her control. Until she chose to permit him to be clad, he was her prisoner.

When she had drawn on her kimono and tiptoed out of her room, on her way to the bath, she glanced at Freeman's closed door and smiled. No need to worry about him for an hour or two!

Half an hour later, fully garbed, she

stepped from her room again. This time she tapped on Freeman's door, gently at first, and then more vigorously. There was no response.

Henrietta opened the door and looked into the room. It was empty; Freeman was gone.

In the hall, in the corner nearest Henrietta's door, stood a wood-box, and above it, where the cover of the box struck against the wall, the plaster and lath had been broken. It was in the hole thus made that Henrietta had thrust Freeman's trousers, crowding them down out of sight. They were still there; and as if in answer to another query that came into her mind at the moment, she heard Gay's voice, brisk and happy, speaking to Lorna below. If Freeman had fled, he had not persuaded Gay to fly with him. Probably he had gone away with such covering as he could improvise, hoping to arouse one of his boon companions and beg what was necessary, Henrietta thought.

When she reached the hall below, she

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found Gay, Lorna, and Johnny Alberson there, laughing over some item in the morning *Eagle*.

"Lem has gone," she said.

"Good for Lem!" said Johnny.

Handing her the paper, he pointed to a head-line.

"Riverbank loses only saint," the head-line said. "Little brother of stray dogs departs for parts unknown—holy life too strenuous for St. Harvey of Riverbank."

Lorna and Johnny, it seemed, had already breakfasted. Henrietta, leaving the three to laugh over the article in the paper, went to the dining-room and through it into the kitchen, where Miss Susan was thumping at a piece of wet wood in her stove, using the lid-lifter.

"Lem has run away," Henrietta said without preliminaries.

"And good riddance! Hope I never set eyes on him again, the mean thief! Him and his pa, indeed—they're a pair, with their robbin' and cheatin'!"

"No, Lem's not a thief. Here is the money you missed."

Miss Susan looked at the bills.

"What's this money? I got mine off of him. He didn't go and steal it over again? You don't mean to tell me that young—"

"No, it wasn't your money you found on him. That was money his father gave him—to run away with, I suppose. He did not take your money at all. Miss Susan, Freeman has gone."

Miss Susan put down the lid-lifter and turned to Henrietta.

"Gone? Run off, you mean? Well, a nice kettle of fish him and you are, I must say! You and your fine husband, lyin' and fightin' with Carter Bruce all over my front yard, and makin' love to Gay and Johnny! I never heard of such goings on in all my born days. What 'd that worthless husband of yours run off for?" She looked at Henrietta keenly. "I expect it was him that stole my money, wasn't it?" she said.

"Yes."

"Then he's a good riddance, and that's all I've got to say about that," said Susan. "And the farther that worthless Lem goes, and the longer he stays, the better I'll like it. When you going?"

"Now—any time—whenever you wish."

"You can't go too soon to suit me," said Miss Susan. "I've had enough and a plenty of the whole lot of you. If you

want to get yourself some breakfast, you can, and if you don't want to, you needn't; but I hope I won't see you around too long. I've got to get your room ready for the next boarder that comes, and I'd like to have it empty by noon."

Henrietta hesitated, but not for more than a moment.

"Of course I'll go if you want me to go, Miss Susan," she said cheerfully. "You've been very kind and patient with me. I just want to thank you for that. I'll never forget it. I *will* have breakfast before I go. I'm ravenous this morning."

She found the coffee-pot on the back of the stove. Miss Susan grudgingly opened the oven door and let Henrietta see where her breakfast had been kept warm. Henrietta carried it to the dining-room. She was eating when Johnny Alberson came in and took a seat opposite her.

"I'm going away," she said.

"You! Going away! Where? What for?" he asked.

"Miss Susan needs my room. She expects another boarder."

"But, hold on! You don't mean it, do you? Where are you going?"

"I don't know—yet. Away from Riverbank, I suppose. I haven't had time to think yet. She just told me."

"But, look here!" he said. "You mean she is sending you away?"

"It seems to be that."

"It does, does it?" said Alberson.

He was out of his chair and on his way to the kitchen, although Henrietta called after him:

"Johnny, wait!"

Henrietta ate her breakfast slowly. She could hear Johnny's briskly cheerful tone and Miss Susan's voice—at first hard and obstinate, then yielding. Johnny came back into the dining-room and sat opposite Henrietta again.

"That's all right now," he said. "You don't have to go unless you want to. She's willing to have you stay."

"She is? Miss Susan is? Whatever did you say to her?"

Johnny leaned forward and smiled at Henrietta.

"I'm an Alberson, you know—one of the Riverbank Albersons. We are used to having our way."

"But that's no reason—that's—she would not let that change her mind. You said something else."

"Why, yes, I believe I did," said Johnny. "I told her you were going to marry an Alberson. I told her you were going to marry me."

Henrietta put down her fork and looked at him squarely.

"But I told you I had a husband. You know I have a husband in Colorado. I told you so."

"Of course! I remember that. I honor you for that, Henrietta; but of course it was all a lie. You have no husband in Colorado. Have you?"

Henrietta tried to look into his eyes and say she had, but his eyes would not look into hers seriously. They twinkled mischievously and looked through her eyes into her heart. She drew a deep breath, like one drowning, and looked down.

"No," she said. "I have no husband—in Colorado!"

XXII

MOSES SHUDER, having paid St. Harvey of Riverbank his good money, went back to his own junk-yard feeling high elation. The great ambition that had urged him ever since he had begun, a raw immigrant, was consummated. He was the sole and only junk king of Riverbank.

He need fear no further competition. He could put prices down, could put prices up, could buy or refuse to buy, and no one would interfere. He saw himself the future great man of his people, bringing his downtrodden compatriots from their bondage in Russia, sending them out upon the streets and roads of free America to glean the waste metals and rags, setting them up in small trades, financing them, being a father to them. He had eliminated Harvey Redding.

Nevertheless, as he considered the transaction, he began to worry. It is the duty of every man, in making a bargain, to make the best possible one, and Shuder began to fear he had not done that. St. Harvey had accepted his offer too promptly.

His knowledge of values quieted this fear somewhat. The junk he had bought was worth more than he had paid for it, he knew, and the yard was worth more than a hundred dollars per year.

Suddenly the awful thought came to him that, although he had paid St. Harvey cash, he had nothing to show for it. He had no "paper," no receipt, no lease, nothing—not even a witness. The cold perspi-

ration oozed from his every pore. He had been cheated!

Moses Shuder, lying beside his soundly sleeping—and snoring—wife, writhed with shame at the thought that he had been such a fool. He pulled at his beard angrily. So be it! He would find this Harvey Redding and make him give a paper. In the morning he—

Suddenly he sat bolt upright.

"Rosa, hush!" he whispered, putting his palm under her chin and closing her mouth.

"What is it, Moses? Fire? Thieves?"

"Hush! Thieves," he whispered.

He slipped out of bed and drew on his trousers. From the lean-to where he kept his most precious junk—his copper and his lead—came the subdued clink of metal. Stealthily Shuder glided to his back door. He glided to the door of the lean-to.

"Thief! I got you!" he cried, and pounced upon Lem.

"You leave me alone! You let go of me!" the boy cried.

But Shuder had him fast. Scolding in Yiddish, he dragged the boy from the lean-to and into the shack. Rosa lit the oil lamp.

"Sure!" panted Shuder. "Young Redink! Stealing chunk! Sure!"

Lem was in a panic. Fear, such as he had never experienced, cowed him. To the mind of youth the strange foreigner seems a thing to be jeered and hooted in the open day, but in the homes and churches and synagogues of the foreigners are believed to lurk strange mysteries—deep, unfathomable, blood-curdling ways and doings, especially dire and hideous when wrought upon boys.

Lem, in Shuder's grasp, did not see the poor shack with its grotesque furnishings; did not see the tawdry intimate surroundings of a poor Jew struggling to wrest comfort and life from a none too friendly environment. He saw a perilous twilight in which might be worked strange tortures, awful incantations, black wizardry. He was scared stiff.

"Stealink!" said Shuder bitterly.

The poor man was, indeed, almost in tears. His natural anger was all but lost in a hopeless feeling that he would never be able to protect his property in this land of scorn.

"You should gif him by a policemen's right away," said Rosa. "He should go to chail. Stealink at night!"

"Vait!" said Shuder, upraising his free hand. "Boy, vere is your fadder?"

"I don't know," Lem whimpered. "How do I know where he is? He don't have to tell me, does he? You let me go, I tell you!"

"Should you tell me vere is your fadder, I let you go," said Shuder. "Stop viggling. I don't hurt you. Why you steal my chunk?"

"I didn't steal it. I just took some."

"Why?" Shuder insisted.

Lem looked up at the Jew.

"I won't tell," he said.

"Then to chail!" said Shuder.

"Well, I wanted it," said Lem reluctantly. Suddenly he broke down and began to cry. "I wanted to go to pop. I wanted to go to him. He told me I could go where he is!"

"Rosa, hush!" said Shuder, when his wife tried to speak again.

He began patiently, with the little English he could command, to comfort Lem and to let him know that nothing dire was to happen to him.

Slowly, Lem's fear of some mysterious fate lessened, as again and again he heard that Shuder, too, wished to find St. Harvey—not to harm him, Shuder assured Lem; only to get a "paper" that the saint had forgotten to leave. The importance of this paper to Shuder loomed vast as the Jew spoke of it repeatedly. In spite of his fear and hatred, Lem felt that it was something Shuder should not be robbed of; that it was some sort of Magna Carta of his life which St. Harvey had carried away by mistake.

"You won't get a policeman after me?" Lem begged.

"Sure, no! I gif you right by it. Sure no!"

"Well, I ain't goin' to tell you. Pop, he told me not to tell; but I can't help it if you go where I go, can I?"

"Nobody could," said Shuder. "How could you?"

"Well, then, you let me go and I'll go. I'll go right where he told me to, because that's what he said for me to do. And I can't help it if you follow me. Only you better get ready to walk a long ways, because it's sixty miles, I guess."

Shuder stroked his beard.

"Could a man go by the railroad?"

"Sure he could, if he had the money."

"Wasn't that what I wanted some junk for

—to sell it, so I could go on the train? But I haven't got any money, so I got to walk."

"Mebby I should pay," said Shuder.

Lem considered this.

"I guess that would be all right," he said, "if you want to. We'd get there sooner, anyway."

Lem would not, however, tell where they were to go even then; and the next morning Shuder had to press close behind the boy at the ticket window to overhear him ask for a ticket to Burlington. He sat beside the boy all the way, too, never moving far from him, even when they changed cars at the junction. At noon he gave Lem a share of the lunch that Rosa had provided, and bought him two apples from the train-boy.

Shuder was close behind when Lem asked at the post-office window for a letter for Lemuel Redding. Although he could not read English, he peered over Lem's shoulder as Lem read the letter the clerk handed out.

"Pa ain't here no more," said Lem, looking up at Shuder. "He's gone somewhere else."

Shuder grasped the letter from Lem's hand and stared at it, turned it over and over.

"Please, misder," he begged of a man who passed, "you should kindly read this to me."

The man took the letter.

"Dear Lem," he read, "I'm going on from here because the Jews have the junk business all tied up here, from what I can see, and it's no place for me. No telling where I'll land up at. You better go back to your Aunt Susan and wait until I send for you. Maybe it won't be as long as it looks like now."

"And the name? The name?" cried Shuder.

"It looks like 'Henry Redding,' or something like that."

"Well, I won't go back," said Lem. "I don't care what he says. I won't go back to that old aunt. I don't care if I starve to death, I won't go back to her!"

Shuder had heard about Miss Susan on the way down from Riverbank, for Lem had been full of a sense of injustice, and had had to talk to some one about it or burst. Lem and his troubles were none of Shuder's affair; but, on the other hand, St. Harvey and the "paper" were, and Lem

was Shuder's only link with St. Harvey now.

"Do I ask you to go back by her, Lemvel?" Shuder demanded. "No! But why should you worry? Ain't I got two houses? Ain't I got two chunk-yards? Ain't I got plenty room? I ask you, come by me for a while, Lemvel."

"Say, what you mean?" Lem asked. "You want me to go and live at your house?"

"Sure!" said Shuder.

Lem looked at the Jew.

"All right," he said. "Until I get word from pop, I will. I bet you don't have so many dishes to wash, anyway!"

Shuder raised a hand.

"Listen! Listen, Lemvel!" he said solemnly. "I gif you my word you shouldn't haf to wash even your face if you don't want to."

"All right, I'll come," said Lem.

XXIII

To his very considerable surprise, Lem did not find residing with the Shuders a painful experience. Rosa, for all her strange ways of doing things and her incomprehensible objection to chickens killed in any but a certain way, was a better cook than St. Harvey, and knew how to prepare things that a boy's appetite found delicious. Lem had to sleep in the lean-to, on an old iron cot set among the piles of junk, but it was summer, and hot, and he enjoyed that.

Shuder made him work, but it was work that Lem liked. It was the kind he had always done for his father, and he had only about half as much of it to do as his father had made him do. He enjoyed helping with the horse, harnessing and unharnessing it.

There was only one thing Lem refused to do—he would not go out of the junkyard. For a week he kept under close cover. Then, one night, he stole away and, keeping in the alley shadows, made his way to Miss Susan's back gate. He did not risk the rusty hinges creaking, but climbed the fence and dodged to the shadow of the house.

Miss Susan was in the kitchen. Lem went around the house. On the porch was Lorna—sitting on one of the steps, as usual—and Henrietta and Johnny Alberson had chairs. It was Henrietta that Lem wanted.

He seated himself under the drooping

spiraea-bushes that edged the porch, and waited. Presently Lorna went indoors. Lem heard a chair move on the porch, and hoped that Johnny Alberson was going, but he was to have no such luck. He heard Johnny speak.

"Henrietta," he said, "when are we going to be married?"

"Never," Henrietta answered, but not as if the question had offended her.

"But I'm not going to take that for answer," he said. "I can't. It would make a liar of me. I told Miss Susan I was going to marry you, and she rather depends on it, poor soul."

"I told you, Johnny, I have a husband. It is ridiculous, sinful, for you to talk to me of marrying."

"I see! Which husband do you mean, Etta? The Colorado one who was and then wasn't?"

"Oh! Please don't!" Henrietta begged. "I can't tell you—not now—not yet—perhaps never. I—"

"If you don't mean the Colorado myth," said Johnny, quite unabashed, "you must mean Freeman. Do you?"

There was a momentary silence.

"Yes, I do mean Freeman," Henrietta said then. "How did you know he was my husband?"

"Well, you see," said Johnny, slowly but wickedly, "he sold you to me. It was the night of the row about Lem stealing Miss Susan's money. Freeman came to my room after you had taken Lem, and we had a frank talk—quite a frank talk. So I bought you."

"John!"

"Yes, I did. You cost me three hundred dollars, too—a lot of money to pay for a wife these days. You cost me two hundred—the money he stole from me—and another hundred in cold cash that I gave him to get away on, and my very best pants. That's three hundred dollars plus. So that settles that!"

"He is still my husband."

"But not for long. He threw in a promise to that effect. I made him. He's getting a divorce now."

"But he can't. I've always been more than faithful."

"Yes, he can. You stole his trousers. That's grounds for the strongest kind of divorce. That's cruelty—cruelty *de luxe*. So that's settled! When are you going to marry me?"

Henrietta, in spite of herself, laughed, but she was serious again instantly.

"Never, John," she said. "I'm not going to do any more marrying. I'm going to do penance for the marrying I have done in the past. If what you say is true, and Freeman frees me, I—"

"What?"

"I want to take that poor Lem boy and make a good man of him. I want to do in Lem what I undid in Freeman. I want that to be my penance."

Johnny laughed, and arose.

"All right! We'll leave it that way tonight. Good night, Henrietta. You've some penance ahead of you, if I know that boy! Good night."

Henrietta sat thinking after Johnny was gone. She had many things she wished to let drift through her mind, trying each as it came up. Johnny Alberson, first of all. If Freeman did get a divorce—

"Say!"

Henrietta, although seldom nervous, was startled by a voice coming from the bushes.

"Who is that?" she asked, her heart standing still. Her first thought was that it was Freeman Todder returned.

"It's Lem," the boy whispered. "Is he gone? Can I come out?"

"Oh, Lem! You did frighten me! Yes, come here. Where have you been, you poor child?"

"I ain't been anywhere," Lem said. "I'm to Shuder's—to his junk-yard. I'm junking for him, and he's keeping me."

"Shuder is? Who is Shuder?"

Lem came and stood by her side.

"He's the Jew. He's the one that pop couldn't stand. He's all right, though, Shuder is. Say!"

"Yes?"

"You know my pop—well, he went away. He said he'd send word to me when he was somewhere else. He said he'd send it here to Aunt Susan's house; but he didn't, did he?"

"No, I'm quite sure he has not."

"Well, I guess he don't want me, anyhow," said Lem. "I guess that's what's the matter. Only—"

"Yes, Lem?"

"If he does send word you'll let me know, won't you? Because I'll be down to Shuder's. You will, won't you? Only don't let that old thief aunt know where I am, will you? Because she'd jail me, darn her! She'd do that in a minute."

"Lem," said Henrietta, "would you like to be my boy?"

"Sure! I'd like it if I was; only I ain't."

"But if I could have you? You would like to be my boy, wouldn't you? And live with me? Not in this house—in some other house."

"What you going to do—buy me off of Aunt Susan?"

Henrietta laughed ruefully. If it came to that, she was herself in pawn to Miss Sue.

"'Cause she's got first rights to me," Lem said. "Unless pop gets me back from her. Say!"

"What, Lem?"

"I guess maybe pop ain't goin' to try very hard to get me back. I guess maybe he don't want to bother about it. I guess, if the Jews have got the upper hand of the junk business everywhere, pop 'll go into the saint business somewhere again. He won't want me then; so I guess, if he don't send me word pretty soon, I'll go somewhere else. You know—where there ain't no old aunt that wants to jail me."

"You mean run away, Lem?"

"Yes. I can get a job, I guess, junking. I don't mind Jews. They cook pretty good. They don't make you wash the dishes, anyway."

Henrietta put her arm around the boy; but he did not like it, and wriggled, and she released him.

"How much does your father owe Miss Susan?" she asked.

"I don't know. A lot, I guess. Only he paid her some. He owes her what's left of what he owed her. Lots of money, I guess."

"A hundred? Two hundred?"

"I guess so. I don't know."

"Well, no matter. I'll let you know if any word comes from your father. But promise me this, Lem—you won't run away until you let me know. I won't tell. Will you promise that?"

"Yes."

"And come to me any time you want to. If you get into trouble, come to me, any night or any day. I'll always sit here awhile after the others go. You'll do that—come to me if you are in trouble?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better go. It's very late."

"All right!"

The boy dropped over the edge of the

porch. For a minute or two longer Henrietta sat there; then she went in.

XXIV

WHEN Henrietta reached her room, she lighted the gas and stood for many minutes before her mirror, looking at her face as it was reflected there. It was thus she took stock of herself, trying to find and appraise the real Henrietta.

The face she saw surprised her, for she had come to her room feeling that she was a wrecked and ruined Henrietta. She had half expected to see the face of a hag, lined with wrinkles of moral ugliness, with the eyes of a slinking liar. She saw the face of a comely woman, younger by far than her actual years warranted. On the face were no lines whatever, either of age or sin. It was a frank face, with the frank eyes of unsoiled innocence.

She bent nearer and studied her eyes. They looked back at her with no signs of deceitfulness. They were clear, steady, honest. Her troubles, her mistakes, her prevarications, had left no marks. She stood back, so that her full bust was reflected, and she tilted the mirror and stood away from it so that she saw all of her figure.

She had meant, if the mirror told her so, to accept the verdict that she was old, decaying, morally and physically vile. Instead, she found herself to be all she had imagined she was not. From outward view she was lovely, and her eyes refused to tell her that she was depraved.

Henrietta undressed slowly, pausing again and again to drop into periods of thoughtfulness, out of which she came slowly. She was trying to rearrange her life, as if she meant, before she slept, to draw an indelible line between the Henrietta she had been and the Henrietta she meant to be.

One thing she saw clearly. There must be restitution for the ill she had wrought Freeman Todder; for she still held herself to blame for what he had become. Since there was no longer hope of Freeman, the restitution must be made vicariously to Lem.

There were other things she must do. The lies she had told must be untold. Then, too, Carter Bruce and Gay must be set right on love's path, for Gay still held bitter resentment against Carter. Johnny Alberson must be turned away forever. If

she could hold her school position another year, or perhaps two years, she must pay Miss Susan and Gay and Lorna, and reimburse Johnny for Freeman's pilferings. It could all be done. She fell asleep finally resolved on all these things.

Lem, for his part, went back to his lean-to and his cot among the junk in the same mind as before. He did not worry much about what women said. When the time came, if he did not hear from his father, he would cut loose from Riverbank.

Henrietta made it a point to see Johnny Alberson the next morning, before he went to his drug-store, and told him, as one saying the final unalterable word, that she would never marry him. He received this sad information cheerfully.

"Didn't think you would," he said. "Hadn't the least hope of it."

"I'm glad," Henrietta said. "It makes it better when you feel so."

"Oh, I've always felt that way," he said jauntily. "I never expected you to marry me. I expected to marry you. And I still expect to. And I'm going to."

He smiled at her.

"But wait," she said. "I want to tell you—"

"Did you ever know me to fail in anything I ever attempted?" he asked.

She said nothing.

"Well, I do, plenty of times," he laughed; "but this is not one of them."

"You'll find that it is one of them," she said, meaning it, too; but he did not seem to worry about it.

Susan Redding, since her interview with Johnny Alberson, had been exceedingly cold to Henrietta, merely tolerating her. Now, when Henrietta turned into the house, Miss Susan was waiting for her in the hall.

"Well, Henrietta," she said, "I must say I'm thankful, it coming just at this time when, goodness knows, I'm hard enough put to it to make ends meet. And I will say I never expected to get it. So I'm thankful."

She handed Henrietta two slips of paper. Henrietta stared at them with amazement, for one was a receipt "in full to date" and the other a receipt "for board, in advance, to October 8."

"I don't say I've figured it exactly right," said Miss Susan; "but I'll make right what ain't right. And as for Mr. Todder's receipt—"

"But why? What do you mean?" asked Henrietta. "Why are you giving me these?"

"I give 'em to you because I'm asked to," said Miss Susan a trifle tartly.

"But the money! I did not pay you any money."

"Nor did you," said Miss Susan, "although I might well suppose you knew it had been given. Mr. Alberson—"

Henrietta colored.

"Did he dare pay this?" she asked angrily.

"He dared hand it over, as he had been told to do, and as it was his duty to do," said Miss Susan.

"It's infamous! He had no right—"

"Right or no right was not for him to say," Miss Susan said. "When your own husband sent the money—"

"Freeman? Freeman sent money? That's nonsense! Freeman sent the money to Mr. Alberson? That's absurd!"

"Absurd or not absurd, it was so sent," said Miss Susan. "I only hope he came by it honestly, but that is no concern of mine. Paid I am, to date and more than to date, and properly grateful, I must say."

Henrietta slowly folded the two receipts together.

"Very well!" she said.

She was furious, but she had no desire to quarrel over the matter with Miss Susan. She would let Johnny Alberson know, however, that such things could not be done. It was, as she had said, infamous. It was effrontery such as she had never imagined possible. She longed to rush to Johnny's shop immediately and tell him so. Of course, however, that would not do. She must wait until he came.

She was interrupted by Gay and Lorna, who came down the stairs.

"Going for a walk," Gay said. "Put on a hat and come, Henrietta!"

Henrietta slipped the receipts into her waist and took her hat from the hall rack. A walk with Gay and Lorna just then suited her well. They went up the hill, and turned, going toward the country.

"I want to tell you something," she said, when they were striding along the country road. "There is no William Vane. I lied about him. I made him up."

Gay laughed.

"Of course! We knew that, Henrietta."

"I suppose so. I was clumsy—toward the last. I was worried—about Freeman."

Gay closed her lips firmly.

"Freeman is my husband," Henrietta told her.

For a full minute Gay said nothing.

"Is that another lie?" she asked then, but her voice was choked.

"I deserve that," said Henrietta. "No, it is not a lie. It is the full truth. Freeman is my husband. He is also a thief. He stole from Johnny Alberson. That is why he ran away. So, you see, we are a nice couple—a thief and a liar!"

Strangely enough, Lorna put her arm around Henrietta's waist. Gay stopped short. The next moment she was at the side of the road, sunk down upon the grass, her face buried in her arms, sobbing. Lorna went to her, and Henrietta stood before her.

"He isn't worth it," she said, meaning Gay's tears.

"Oh, I know! I know!" Gay wept. "It's not that. I don't know what it is. I didn't like him. I hated him. I knew he was bad. I don't know what's the matter. I'm just so miserable! I'm so wicked—so mean!"

"Don't cry; don't cry, Gay," Lorna was begging.

"Well, I can't help it. I've been so mean to him—to Car—to Carter. And he loves—he loves me so! He's so good and—good and—and I've been so—"

"Hush! It will be all right, Gay," Lorna comforted. "Stop now. Pretend you've not been crying, anyway; here comes a farmer."

Gay wiped her eyes and looked down the road. Up the hill a rig was coming slowly, one flat wheel thumping the road with a rattle of loose tire at each revolution. In the shafts was an aged gray horse that stopped now and then to swish its tail and turn its head in an attempt to bite a horsefly on its withers. In the cart sat a fat man—a very fat man, who objurgated the old horse vociferously.

"Dod baste you!" he cried. "Get along there. Giddap! Go on! Dod baste you, you're enough to make a saint swear, you old lummo, you!"

St. Harvey of Riverbank was returning from his travels.

XXV

THAT noon Henrietta hurried across the road to the Bruce mansion. She found Judge Bruce on the porch, wiping his face

and resting, after his walk up the hill, before going in for his midday meal.

"Carter Bruce here?" she asked rather breathlessly.

"Why, no, he ain't," said the old judge. "Set down, won't you, Henrietta? Hot day! No, Carter ain't home. He's gone on a trip—out to Nevada or somewhere—some sort of business Johnny Alberson sent him off on. Wasn't nothing I'd do as well at, was it?"

It was not.

"Johnny Alberson sent him?" exclaimed Henrietta.

"That's right," said the judge. "Looks sort of suspicious to me," he added with a twinkle. "Ain't ever heard of Johnny having a wife, have you? Nevada's where folks go to get rid of them entangling alliances, I've heard tell."

Henrietta looked at him acutely.

"He didn't say why he was going—Carter didn't?" she asked.

"He might have, and then again he mightn't have," said the judge. "No use pumpin' me, Henrietta. Us law folks can't be pumped." He waited and then asked: "Heard from that Freeman Todder boarder of Miss Susan's lately?"

Henrietta studied the old man's face.

"You won't tell me anything?" she asked.

"Not a mite," said the judge. "Ain't no use askin' it;" and he chuckled.

Henrietta put her hand to her cheek, which was so hot that it was like flame to her hand. She turned from the judge and saw Johnny Alberson coming up the hill, as jaunty and unconcerned as if the day was not broiling hot.

"Oh!" she wailed.

She sped down and across the street, and intercepted the obnoxious druggist. He received her with a smile.

"Hot day," he said genially.

Henrietta brushed this aside.

"Did you send Carter Bruce West—to attend to my divorce? Did you dare interfere to that extent in my affairs? Did you?" she demanded.

"Bruce—Carter Bruce?" said Johnny. "Why, yes, come to think of it, I did send him West on some sort of divorce business. You see, I thought such things went better when personally conducted."

"I don't care what you think! Did you dare to pay my bill to Miss Susan? Did you dare do that?"

"Oh, was that your bill I paid?" asked Johnny. "I did pay some board bill. I do remember that now."

"I won't have it!" declared Henrietta. "It's monstrous! It's outrageous! I never heard of such unwarranted—"

"Neither did I," said Johnny. "I'd be ashamed of myself—if I ever was ashamed." Then, seriously: "But why shouldn't I? Two months from now it would be all right—when we are married. What are two months? Sixty days!"

"I've told you I'm not going to marry you. That I meant; and more than ever I mean it now. You have insulted me beyond measure!"

"Yes, awfully," said Johnny. "And that isn't all. I've canceled what your Freeman took from me. I'm a caveman, Henrietta. I'm clubbing you with a modern sort of club. I'm getting you in my villainous toils."

"It is not a thing to be jocular about," said Henrietta. "I will not have it!"

"All right," said Johnny cheerfully. "What are you going to do not to have it? Look, Henrietta—why be so obstinate? Don't you like me?"

"I will not have it!" she could only repeat.

"That's not what bothers me," said Johnny. "What I want to know is whether you will have me?"

"I will not have you," said Henrietta. "I'll never marry any man, and least of all you—after this!"

"You'll just take Lem and go off and be a grandmother to him," said Johnny. "That's nice. Well—it's almost too hot to eat, isn't it?"

What could be done with such a man? There was nothing Henrietta could do. She had no money to repay what he had paid Miss Susan, and she did not know where Freeman had gone. Nevada might mean Reno, but old Judge Bruce was no fool, and Nevada might not even mean Nevada—probably did not. She stopped short where she stood. Johnny tipped his hat politely and went on.

Later that day Henrietta sat in the cool parlor of the boarding-house trying to think what to do. She had gone over her slender assets, and had found them all too scant to permit her to leave Riverbank, taking Lem or not taking Lem.

To her came Miss Susan bearing a soiled envelope.

"A boy fetched this. He said there wasn't any answer," Miss Susan said. "He was that Swatty boy, and I gave him a good piece of my mind about thieving, while I had the chance."

Henrietta tore open the envelope. The note was from Harvey Redding. It asked her to come, if she could, to see him, at the junk-yard of Moses Shuder. "About Lemuel," the note said.

Henrietta went. She found the late saint in the junk-yard tossing old iron into Shuder's wagon.

"I wouldn't have asked you to come here," Harvey said, wiping his face, which was streaked with perspiration and rust, "only on account of Lem yonder. Lem's scared. Lem's afraid, now that I've come back, his aunt 'll get word that I'm back, and will come and fetch him and jail him. He's mortal afraid of that aunt, Lem is. Don't know as I blame him so dod-basted much, either. I'm sort of scared of her myself."

"No reason, Mr. Redding," Henrietta said. "She's cross—sometimes—but her heart is kind."

"Lem don't feel so," said Harvey. "Seems like she's dead set against Lem. Well, what I asked you to come for—seeing how I was scared to go up to Susan's house—was about somethin' Lem said about you wantin' to have him. I don't know but I'm willin'."

"But don't you want him yourself, Mr. Redding?" asked Henrietta, with a leap of her heart.

"I might want him, dod baste it," said Harvey, "but I ain't got him. She's got him. I pawned him to her, and since I've went into pardnership with this here Shuder—"

"What?"

"Well, he ain't so dod-basted bad, at that, when you come to know him," said Harvey. "He's sort of set against ham, but if other food is plenty I can git along. And the dicker I made with him, as I was sayin', is goin' to take all my spare cash for quite awhile. I guess him and me, when we git things goin' right, is goin' to control the junk business of this town, and no mistake. We got a good combination in him and me. He's a hard worker, and me—I've got the brains!"

"But about Lem?"

"Well, that's it. Accordin' to these here terms of pardnership, I'm goin' to have to

put in all the spare cash I can get for quite some time. It looks like it would be years before I could git Lem out of pawn, and he does hate dod-bastedly to be pawned to his Aunt Susan, he does. So if you want to unpawn him and git him pawned to you, I ain't got no objections."

"And you, Lem?" asked Henrietta. "Would you rather be pawned to me?"

"I bet you!" the boy said eagerly. "I'd like it."

"I don't know! I'll see what I can do," Henrietta said. "I would love to have him. It is the greatest—the only desire of my heart."

She went straight to Miss Susan when she reached the house.

"Well, I don't know," Miss Susan said, when Henrietta had made her proposition, which was to take Lem out of pawn and pay Miss Susan the amount of Harvey's note a little at a time. "I won't tell a lie for nobody, not even to keep up a spite. Lem's been a sore trial to me, and I guess I ain't made to have boys around me. And there was a time when I thought you was the nicest woman I'd ever met. You've got a way with you that makes folks like you. Often and often I've wished I had time from my work so I could fix myself up and set on the porch with you and get real friendly. Mebby you won't know what I mean, Henrietta, but many a time I've wished I had time to get the grease off me and be so I could put my arm around you, like Lorna and Gay does. That's the sort of way you've got about you. I ain't ashamed to say there's been many a time when I'd have given a lot if I could have kissed you."

"Yes, I know," said Henrietta. "I know the feeling."

"Mebby so," said Susan; "but, if so, I guess you never had it when you was thinkin' of me. Nor I ain't ever had it toward no other woman, or man—not even my ma, as far as I can remember; she was such a fretty, naggish creature, poor soul!"

Miss Susan wiped an eye, furtively.

"I had an aunt once that made doughnuts and smelled of pink soap," she went on. "The way I felt to her was the nearest like what I felt toward you. I don't know what to call it, unless it's like thoughts of a cool grave on a hot Sunday mornin' in church, after a hard week's work. Henrietta, you're so comfortable! There just ain't no vinegar in you!"

"There is in you, Susan," Henrietta said. "Do you know how much?"

"A plenty!"

"Just about one drop to a gallon of goodness," said Henrietta gaily. "A pint is a pound, isn't it? There must be about a hundred and sixty pints of you, Susan, and not more than one pint is vinegar. Only you do let it all come to the top—you certainly do! And you are getting more and more vinegar."

"I have my trials."

"The trouble with both of us is that we're failures, and we're beginning to get old, and it hurts," said Henrietta. "You were going to send me away when I hadn't a cent in the world, but that would not have hurt me as much as you. Such things would turn three more pints of Susan into vinegar. And you'll nag Lem, and there'll be three more pints of vinegared Susan. Do you know what I've noticed, Susan?"

"What?"

"I'm like soda to you. When you're sour, a good spoonful of me makes you fizz and boil, but when you finish fizzing and boiling you are as sweet as honey. I take the sour out of your vinegar."

"Yes, you do so," said Susan, sighing. "That's why it is so hard on me to have to not like you. I wish you was a different sort of woman!"

"I am!" said Henrietta eagerly. "I am, and I mean to be. Try me! Let me have Lem!"

"Well, I'll think it over," said Miss Susan.

Henrietta was happier than she had been for years. She went from Miss Susan happily. If she could have Lem she would have a life work—an opportunity to redeem the harm she had done to Freeman. She would have a shield against Johnny Alberson, too. Twice that afternoon she spoke to Miss Susan.

"I ain't had time to think it over," Miss Susan replied the first time.

"Well, I'm inclined," she said the second time. "I'm more for than against, but I ain't quite sure yet. It looks like I would be."

For Gay and Carter Bruce, Henrietta had no more fears. She was even able to treat Johnny Alberson with haughty calm when he came home that evening. At supper she questioned Miss Susan with her eyes as that tired but tireless woman waited on the table.

"I'm goin' to say yes, if I don't change my mind," Miss Susan whispered. "You see me before I go to bed."

Henrietta was as happy as a young girl that evening, for she felt sure that Miss Susan would give up Lem. She carefully avoided Johnny Alberson, doing so by putting her arm around Lorna's waist and going across to Gay's. What might happen to Johnny she did not care at that moment.

"Henrietta," Lorna said, as they crossed the street, "do you know that Gay has had a letter from Carter Bruce? Carter says he is superintending a divorce. Do you know whose?"

"Freeman's," Henrietta answered.

"Yes, I knew that, Lorna."

"Bruce writes that it is practically settled; that it is all arranged but the final details. Henrietta—"

"Yes?"

"You don't tell me anything about this love-affair. Is Johnny Alberson—has he—I mean—"

"He has asked me to marry him, if that is what you mean, Lorna," Henrietta said; "but if you mean you want to know whether I am going to marry him or not, I'm not. I'm not going to marry any one. I'm going to have Lem. I'm going to make Miss Susan give me Lem. I'm going to live with Miss Susan, and we will all be as happy as the day is long."

"I think Johnny likes you awfully well," Lorna ventured.

Henrietta gave Lorna's waist a little squeeze.

"I know he does," she admitted cheerfully; "but I'm Lem's, and Lem is going to be mine."

They found Gay in a tremble of happiness, for Carter Bruce had written other things in his letter than the mere report that Freeman would surely have his divorce in a few days. It was almost an hour later when Henrietta rose from her seat on Gay's porch and peered across the street.

"Who is that?" she asked. "Isn't that Lem's father going up Miss Susan's steps? It is! Good-by, Gay!"

She overtook the panting ex-saint before he reached Miss Susan's front door.

"Oh, Mr. Redding!" she exclaimed. "I know you've come to see your sister. Here—this is the easiest chair. You must be so tired. I'll tell her you're here. You want a fan, I know."

"Well, 'tis dod-basted hot," said Har-

vey, taking the proffered fan. "It's hot enough to make a saint swear, if I was one, which I ain't. No, ma'am, never again! Saining ain't in my line—not as a regular job. I don't say that maybe I won't do a little at it off and on, times when the junk business gets a mite slack, but I don't figger to go at it regular again. The way I figger it out is that being a saint is too easy work for a big, strong man like me. Yes, ma'am, too easy work. I may take a whack at it once in a while as a sort of amusement, but—"

It was evident that Harvey did not mean to use the chair Henrietta had drawn forward for him, and a great fear came to her that he would reach Miss Susan and reclaim Lem. She pushed past him into the hall, and locked the screen door.

"I'll tell Miss Susan you are here," she said as she fled.

She threw open the kitchen door and stopped short. Miss Susan sat in her long kitchen chair, and before her, seated on the edge of the table, was Johnny Alberson.

"Oh!" Henrietta ejaculated. "I didn't know—"

"Wait!" said Miss Susan, as Henrietta was about to go. "I may as well say it now as any time, Henrietta. I can't let you have Lem."

Johnny Alberson carefully smoothed the cloth over his well-rounded knee. He caught Henrietta's eye and smiled at her.

"Caveman business, Henrietta," he said.

"What do you mean? Has Mr. Alberson been telling you I am not fit to have—" Henrietta began.

"Well, I'm sure I hate to disappoint you," Miss Susan interrupted; "but an Alberson is an Alberson, and cash money is cash money. Lem ain't pawned to me any more; he's pawned to Mr. Alberson. Mr. Alberson paid me what Harvey owes me, and Lem's his."

"Is this true?" Henrietta demanded.

She felt that she ought to be furiously angry, but for some reason she was not. Her heart, instead of pumping angry blood to her cheeks, leaped joyously, but she tried to put indignation in her voice.

"Lem's mine," said Johnny.

"I thought maybe you wouldn't mind, Henrietta," said Miss Susan, "seeing as how Johnny tells me you and him are going to be married almost right away."

"Caveman business, Henrietta," Johnny repeated. "You see it is no use trying to

fight me. I'm a rough one. I always have my way. An Alberson is an Alberson."

"But you can't do this thing!" Henrietta exclaimed. She would not be driven in this way. "You cannot hand a child around as if he was a chattel, passing him from one to another. There is such a thing as the law, and there are a father's rights. A child cannot be pawned. I'll see his father. I'll—"

Harvey Redding, waving his palm-leaf fan, opened the door that led from the kitchen garden and came into the kitchen. Miss Susan turned her head.

"Umph!" she said scornfully. "It's about time you showed up, I expect. A nice sort of a saint you are, runnin' off no one knows where to, and—"

"Now, Susan," Harvey pleaded, "I ain't no saint no more—"

"And leaving your son to be passed back and forth like—"

"Now, you hold on!" interrupted Harvey. "Don't you go tongue-lashing me that way! I said I wasn't no saint, and I ain't, and I'm liable to say what I feel like if you get me mad. You don't understand the first principles of bein' a saint, Susan Redding, and you've got no right to criticize one. I've been one, and I know. You're a nice one to talk about Lem, when all the time I've been wearin' my brain to a frazzle tryin' to figger out what would be best for him, goin' and mortifying my flesh so I could be a saint and he could be proud of me, and goin' into the junk business, and out of it, and into it again. Don't you talk about saints! Why, dod baste it, Susan! I'm more of a saint, now that I ain't one, than I was when I was one. Ain't I brought you the money right now to redeem Lem back?"

"You brought the money?"

Harvey tossed it into his sister's lap with a grand gesture.

"Money!" he puffed. "Count it! Ain't I brought it to you? And ain't I gone and give up my only son to Mr. Alberson here to keep forever, tearin' my feelin's to pieces for Lem's good, so that boy could be raised up an Alberson? Ain't I signed a paper so that Mr. Alberson here can adopt Lem? And you say I'm a nice sort of saint. Dod baste it, I ain't either a nice sort of saint!"

Henrietta's face did redden now.

"Are you going to do that?" she asked Johnny. "Are you going to adopt Lem?"

"Caveman business," said Johnny, grinning at her fondly. "If Lem is willing, I'm going to adopt him."

"I'll fetch him. There ain't no time like the present to get things settled," said Miss Susan.

While she was gone the three stood silent, Johnny still smiling at Henrietta. Harvey was the first to move. His roving eyes caught sight of a ham, partially demolished, on a platter on the table, and he moved toward it and cut a thick, unsaintly slice and laid it on a slice of bread.

"Lem likes ham," he said. "You give Lem plenty of ham, and you won't have no trouble with him. He takes after me that way."

"Is that so, Lem?" asked Johnny, as Lem appeared in the doorway, rubbing his sleepy eyes with one hand and trying to hold a coat around his waist with the other. "Do you like ham?"

"I guess so," the boy said. "I mean yes, sir, I do."

"Then that's all right," said Johnny. "You shall have lots of ham. Too bad we had to waken you, boy, but we wanted to ask you how you would like me for a father?"

"I'd like you all right, I guess," said Lem.

"Fine!" said Johnny. "That's good, you see, because I'm going to be your father from now on. And how would you like Miss Henrietta for a mother?"

"I'd like that fine," said Lem, and he let his hand fall to Henrietta's hand and grasped it. "I'd like that bully!" He looked up at Henrietta. "Are you going to be?" he asked wistfully. "I wish you would be! Are you?"

Somehow Johnny Alberson was kneeling at the other side of the boy then, and when his arm went around Lem it went around Henrietta, too.

"Are you, Henrietta?" Johnny asked.

"Oh, yes—yes!" said Henrietta. "I am, Lem, because I love you," and then, much lower, she added: "and Johnny!"

Miss Susan wiped her eyes on the edge of her apron. Harvey, too, seemed to be affected, for he turned his back on the little group by the door, but what he said was:

"Well, I got quite a long walk ahead of me. I guess I'll just slice off another slice of ham to sort of eat on the way down. I don't never seem to get enough of ham since I've been a saint!"

THE END

THE VANS OF NEW YORK

SAID Victorine Van Arrogance:

"I naturally much
Appreciate the circumstance
That my forebears were Dutch,
Who came and settled in New York
In Knickerbocker days;
Why should I, therefore, ever balk
At publishing their praise?"

And so she went and formed a club
Of folks whose names began—
To give all other folks a snub—
With good old Holland "Van";
Like Van der Gilt and Van der Veer,
Van Stand, Van Stare, Van Wink,
And Van der Loaf and Van der Leer,
Van Push, Van Shove, Van Blink.

But lo, behold, in little time
These people one and all,
Without a reason or a rime,
Were mixed up in a brawl.
Alas for precedence and place,
Distinction and degree!
The club expired in dire disgrace
From too much Van-ity.

Harold Seton

The Star of Hope

BEING THE LOVE-STORY OF AN OFFICE LIZARD

By Robert J. Horton

THE minute — no, the *instant* — that Eddie Warner saw Mabel Skinner enter the factory offices of the Adam Wright Machine Company, he knew something he had had but a moment before was gone. He suspected that it was his heart. As he held his pen poised in complete bodily paralysis over the reports that he was checking up, he reflected that he was prepared to throw his bank-roll and his future after it, and to allow that blond vision of feminine loveliness to assume complete charge of both, and of himself in the bargain, for all time.

Just so completely, and without being aware of it, did Mabel score her first conquest after taking a place as a stenographer in the Wright factory offices. Nor did her victories stop there. One by one all the unmarried men in the place fell in love with her, and one by one she laughed them out of it and back to normal with that jolly, slightly derisive laugh of hers, which sounded, nevertheless, like the happy ripple of a stream playing among boulders.

That is, she laughed them all out of it except Eddie.

Eddie refused to be laughed out, and, what was more disconcerting to Mabel, he insisted upon being encouraged without any assistance from her—in spite of her, in fact.

Eddie was hard hit. He had been knocked clear off the track of his regular lines of thought. Where he had formerly got up in the morning thinking of two fried eggs and two slices of ham, he now rose dreaming of a pair of dancing blue eyes and two ruby lips ever ready to break into a smile. He neglected the eggs and ham until his landlady became suspicious, put two and two together, as the saying goes, surmised just what was the matter, and cut down his portions—which is the wise way of landladies.

At first Mabel seemed pleased with Eddie. He amused her, perhaps; for in some ways she exhibited an air of quiet superiority which she wished taken as an evidence of experience. But she knew he meant exactly what he said. He had the advantage of many of her other male admirers in that he did not indulge in idle, giggling compliments; he hit straight from the shoulder. Nor did he attempt to become overly familiar with her—which was pleasant, for a change. His tactics, however, were not camouflaged.

"I'm twenty-one, Mabel," he said one day, "and when I have anything to remark I go right to headquarters and say it. I'm telling you that you're the classiest girl I ever saw—an' I mean it, an' you can have the raised-deck boat any day!"

"The raised-deck boat?"

Her curiosity was intrigued. Eddie sighed; but when he looked at her again he smiled. Of course she could not be expected to know what his plans for the spring had been; and what were circumvented plans compared with such a girl as this?

For two years Eddie had been saving money for a raised-deck boat. He had three hundred and seventy-five dollars in the bank; and it was spring, and the boat was within reach—so nearly in his grasp, in fact, that he had been visiting the boat-clubs along the Hudson every Saturday afternoon and Sunday, inspecting alleged bargains. He had gone out with friends in their boats, and he loved the water; but he had wanted above all things to be master of his own craft.

This might not seem the most laudable ambition in a young man working for a moderate salary in a factory office; but it is the same variety of ambition which makes men masters of their own crafts in business and industry.

"I was intending to buy a raised-deck boat this spring," he explained to Mabel. It was something that she evinced interest in anything connected even remotely with him, he reflected.

"How fine!" she exclaimed. "I suppose you'll be wanting me to go for a boat ride."

"But I've changed my mind about buying it."

"Oh!"—with a lifting of her pretty eyebrows.

"I have had more serious things to think about—since I met you," he said soberly.

"Indeed! That's very interesting, Mr. Warner!"

"Now look here, Mabel, I don't want you calling me that. My name's Ed—or Eddie."

"How about Edward?" she suggested with a mocking laugh.

This conversation was carried on in the company's lunch-room one noon. Eddie made a practise of getting a seat beside her whenever possible. This had subjected him to the raillery of the other masculine employees, but he disregarded their sallies as trivial in view of the main issue.

"Mabel, I'd like to take you to a dance," he suddenly announced.

"Well, you appear physically able," she returned; "but my dance dates are all taken for some time."

That was a hard one to get around, and Eddie knew it.

"How long?" he demanded lamely.

"Oh, weeks and weeks," she replied cheerfully. Eddie gazed at her in silent reproach. "A month, anyway," she amended, relenting.

"Well, it's a long time to wait," said Eddie; "but the True Blue Boat Club dance is a month from Friday, and I'd like to take you to that."

"If you insist," she said haughtily, fairly caught. "But I think you had better think more of your boats and less of me."

However, though spring came on apace, and the river bloomed with as many miniature vessels as there were perambulators on the Drive, Eddie gradually forgot his plans for independent navigation, and—more creditable this, some may think—began to regard the figures of his bank balance in an entirely new light. He had had other plans, too, and some of them had involved contemplated expenditures; but he forgot them also.

His heart was gone, in a way of speaking, but he had something in place of it which drove the blood bounding through his body. At times it thrilled him, again it awed him, but ever it strengthened the resolute longing which had as its objective a dainty girl whose very laugh of derision was sweeter than the music of lapping water in his ears.

II

WHEN Mabel said that her dance dates were taken for a month, she spoke pretty closely to the truth. She was as popular with her friends as she was capable in her office duties. And, like many another girl who goes to business, she had certain ideas and dreams.

One of her definite ideas concerned marriage. She expected to be married some time, naturally, but the prospect was vague and, she believed, far in the future. She had had offers, to be sure; had been momentarily thrilled, had light-heartedly reasoned them down to laughing refusals.

Mabel was only nineteen, and the right man had not yet come around; but sometimes she dreamed of him. Money? That would depend on the man. It would not be absolutely essential, she felt sure. Position? It would be nice, of course, but again it was a question of the man. Occupation? That would also depend on the man. It seemed to her that practically everything would depend on the man—that is, with one exception.

She had many suitors; but among these none was more serious or more original than Eddie Warner.

Every morning he found an opportunity to lean over her desk and say a few words. Every afternoon he found or made another such opportunity, and took advantage of it. Always he drew that tantalizing smile and laugh of hers for a reply, supplemented occasionally by a few words of banter. It was scant encouragement, indeed—scant enough to discourage most youths of twenty-one or thereabout.

Eddie was madly in love and thoroughly in earnest. On the night of the True Blue Boat Club dance he sat out a number with Mabel on the upper veranda of the clubhouse, under the colored lanterns hung there for the occasion, and got down to business.

"Mabel, when I was telling you about the boat that time, I was thinking of the

money I had saved to buy it. Three hundred and seventy-five dollars it was then, and now it's four hundred dollars I've got in the bank."

"Isn't that enough to buy one?" she asked, surprised.

"Yes, but it'll buy a lot of other things, Mabel. It'll rent a small flat and furnish it—not all cash down, of course, but it'll pay for a start. When I said you could have the boat, I meant you could have the money it represents, or what the money will do. A little flat of your own—"

"I don't want to live in a flat," she broke in.

"Well, where do you want to live?"

"Right where I am. I'm very comfortably situated, thank you."

"But, Mabel, I'm asking you to marry me."

"Oh, *that's* it!" she exclaimed, looking at him with widely opened eyes. "It can't be done, Eddie," she added gently.

"You're not engaged?"

"No."

"You're not — er — you're not in love with anybody else?"

"No—nor with you either, Eddie."

"But, Mabel, I love you enough to make up for the two of us at the start, and if I fix up a nice little home for you—"

"No, Eddie, it can't be done."

"You don't exactly hate to have me around, do you, Mabel?"

"N-o," she faltered. "I kind of like you, Eddie; but to like you enough to marry you—well, I couldn't marry you if I did!"

"But why not, Mabel?" he demanded, thunder-struck.

"I—I can't tell you that," she replied, rising.

"But don't you think I've sort of a right to know?"

"Maybe; but—I don't want to hurt your feelings, Eddie. No, I don't mean it in the way you may think. I mean that—oh, take me in, Eddie, and let's dance!"

"All right, but you're my star of hope just the same," he insisted stoutly as they went in to the dancing-floor.

Which is exactly what Mabel was in Eddie's life—his bright star of hope. He refused to join the procession of her rejected suitors who had changed from ardent lovers to admiring friends. He stuck to his guns, and kept up an enthusiastic and systematic campaign to win her.

"I added a nice table-lamp with a hand-painted shade to our flat furnishings this month," he told her one evening, when they rode back to Manhattan from Brooklyn, where the factory was situated.

"Our flat furnishings!" she laughed at him.

"We're getting a pretty good nest-egg, Mabel."

"Eddie, you're good! At least, you're something new. No, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but if you don't stop talking such nonsense I won't let you ride home with me in the same car, if I can avoid you. Do be sensible!"

So Eddie wisely found other topics of conversation when he rode with her to her station, as he often did, and then took a train back to his own. He took her out every evening she would permit, and now and then he called her up, or sent her a box of candy as a telling shot in his campaign.

As luck would have it, they drew vacations at the same time in August. Because of her short service she had only one week, while Eddie had two.

On the Saturday afternoon when their vacations started he prevailed upon her to accompany him to a beach for the afternoon and evening; and before the evening was over he made a startling confession.

"I'm going to stay in town," he informed her seriously, "because what I can save on the cost of the vacation I had planned will buy us a kitchen cabinet for you."

For Mabel it was apparently the last straw. No girl hates to have admirers. Most girls appreciate persistence in a wooer; but Mabel was tired and—annoyed.

"Eddie," she said earnestly, "for the last time I'm going to ask you to forget it!"

He sensed that this time she really meant it. He kept silent for a spell. Then he said:

"Mabel, why is it you just *won't* consider me seriously?"

"I hate to say it, Eddie, honestly, but you make me say it. I'll *never* marry an office lizard!"

III

BOB POETTER, assistant superintendent of the Wright plant, was a gruff man as well as a large man. He had a reputation as a fighter, and the men both appreciated and feared him. Secretly they admired him, too. He had a stern, piercing, some-

times repelling look, and lived up to it. When he was out of hearing they called him the "old man" and "Bob"; but to their faces he was Mr. Poetter. He ruled with an iron hand.

On the Saturday morning which marked the end of his two weeks of vacation, Eddie Warner stood in the entrance to the tool-room waiting for Poetter to make his morning rounds—a duty which the assistant superintendent never neglected.

Eddie had been doing a great deal of thinking in the two weeks of freedom which had been his. He had not seen Mabel since that night on the beach. She had gone to the mountains for her week, and he had had a chance to go up the Hudson River on a boating and camping trip, at slight expense; but the remark she made that night had cut pretty deep into Eddie's reasoning processes.

An office lizard!

He had thought mighty seriously over that. It had been borne in upon him that his prospects in his present position could not, at the best, be considered very bright. It had made him angry, at first; then common sense had come to his rescue. He had realized, with more or less surprise, that he had for some time looked upon his occupation as a clerk in the office as temporary, as a pause before a step toward something better; but he had given scant attention to the nature of the step, nor did he know when it should be taken. His vision of progress had been blurred by the imaginary outlines of the boat he had been saving his money to buy.

Mabel was right—he was an office lizard. Of course there had to be office lizards, and some of them rose to be office managers in time—a long time, usually; but—

He spied Poetter coming on his rounds; and as the big, burly, stern-eyed assistant superintendent drew close to him, Eddie stepped out and spoke.

"Mr. Poetter, may I talk to you a minute?"

Talk! Few people actually *talked* with Bob Poetter. They spoke a word or two, and he snapped a reply and went on. The assistant superintendent eyed Eddie with plain disfavor, noting the neatly pressed blue suit and the white collar—too neat and well arranged to denote a mill hand, perhaps.

"What do you want?" demanded Poetter in his gruff voice.

"I want a job outside, Mr. Poetter."

"Outside what?"

"Outside the factory offices."

"Thought I'd seen you somewhere," grumbled Poetter. "You know where the employment offices are, don't you?"

The assistant superintendent started on.

"But I want to make *sure* of this job," persisted Eddie; "and so I came straight to headquarters. I've got to have an outside job, Mr. Poetter!"

Poetter stopped, more or less amazed. Strong and unaccustomed language this, to be addressed to him. *Got* to have a job! But Eddie didn't give him a chance to make the fiery retort which was even then on the assistant superintendent's tongue.

"It's like this, Mr. Poetter—I've been working in that office and getting nowhere. I didn't realize it until a couple of weeks ago when a girl I—I think quite a lot of called me an—an—office lizard. It woke me up, and it—it made me mad. I want a job—a regular he-man's job, where I can throw things around—that is, not throw things around, but—well, you know!"

For an instant, perhaps a little more than an instant, Poetter's lips appeared to tremble in what looked suspiciously like the beginning of a grin—something as foreign to him as a pink silk shirt. His eyes, too, had a peculiar expression as he gazed vaguely about at everything in sight except Eddie.

"Said you was a—a—"

Poetter couldn't get the words out without a genuine grin, so he suppressed them.

"Exactly," said Eddie, flushing. "Now where do I go to work Monday morning, Mr. Poetter? My vacation is up then. I'll begin at the bottom."

"Yes, I'm quite sure of that," said Poetter, in tones which were not quite so gruff as usual by a hair margin. "You can report to Adams, in the yard. You might as well leave your collar hanging on the time-clock, for sweat 'll wilt it, and you'll sweat a little trucking castings!"

The big assistant super moved away with something in his throat that sounded as if it might be a chuckle.

Eddie left the plant with a smile on his face, stopping just long enough at a telephone-booth to phone to his office boss that he was taking a different position in the plant, and would not report for work on Monday morning.

"Wanted to get outside work," he ex-

plained, "and didn't want to leave the company right after vacation, so I got a job right here. I guess you can fill my place all right."

"I don't think we'll have much trouble," snapped his boss, as he hung up.

"There you are!" grinned Eddie to himself. "No trouble to get office lizards! Now if Mabel is home to-night—no, I'll wait awhile before I see her again."

And by nine o'clock on Monday morning the sweat was running off Eddie's chin in such volume that it threatened to soak and shrink his new near-wool working shirt long before the laundry could get a whack at it!

IV

MABEL felt a growing anticipation of something—she did not know just what—as the time approached for Eddie to return from his vacation. During the week she had spent in the mountains—or, at least, at frequent intervals during that week—she had felt sorry for what she had said to him that night, although it was no more than the truth.

Mabel liked her work, but nevertheless she had made up her mind to leave the office environment behind when she married that visionary man at that visionary time in the future. Even now she detested shop-talk outside of the office. By forgetting her work when she left her desk, she was able to come back to it each morning fresh and ready for the new day's duties.

She hadn't wanted to hurt Eddie's feelings. She had sent him two cards from the mountains. Had he really been silly enough to give up the vacation he had planned, in order to save money for that ridiculous kitchen cabinet? It would be extremely funny if it were not for Eddie's seriousness, and for the remarkable fact that because she could not explain it or laugh it away the incident gave her a feeling which closely approached a thrill. Eddie was a good sort, all right—clean and upstanding; but she had meant what she said, just the same, and she would *never* take it back.

It was not until after ten o'clock of the Monday morning when Eddie should have returned to the office that she deliberately turned around and looked toward the desk where he usually worked. He was not there! Nor did he at any time that morning appear at her desk, as was his usual

way, with some kind of a remark—never disagreeable or impertinent. After all, Eddie *was* pretty much of a gentleman.

When the afternoon passed without his reporting for work, she decided that he must be sick. But the next morning, when a new clerk appeared at Eddie's desk and took up the duties which had been his, she knew he wasn't coming back. Then she realized, not without a qualm of misgiving, that her remark which had made him so silent and thoughtful that night at the beach had indeed had serious results of some sort. She felt irritated that she should feel concerned about Eddie or any other young man of her large acquaintance, but that didn't suppress her misgivings or allay her indefinable fears.

So when she accidentally met him coming out of the yards at quitting time on Wednesday night, she felt relieved as well as surprised.

"Why, Eddie, *what* are you doing?" she asked, staring at him in pure amazement.

Eddie smiled a rather weary sort of smile and shrugged a half-hearted shrug as he replied:

"I'm working, Mabel. What did you expect?"

She inspected him carefully as he stood before her in working clothes and shoes, with his shirt open at the neck, a good deal of dirt upon his face and hands, and a battered hat upon his head. And in that instant she unconsciously became aware of something which most women know, which is that the male of the species—if he be a tolerably good-looking male and reasonably well set up—has a certain inexplicable but positive attraction when roughly dressed in clothes that speak indubitably of manly toil.

"But what are you working at?" she gasped, pleased in spite of herself.

"Oh, I'm in the yard. Have to start at the bottom, wherever we are. I began Monday morning on my rise to superintendent by trucking castings—if you know what that is. If you don't know, don't ever try to find out!"

Eddie rode as far as his *own* station with her that night. He didn't say much, and she felt a bit piqued at his taciturnity. She laid it to bashfulness due to the contrast between the spick-and-span appearance of her clothes as against the work-stained garments that he wore. But—to her ever-growing amazement and irritation—she

found herself liking Eddie Warner more than she ever had before!

He had left his desk for some kind of work which must be awfully hard because she had called him an office lizard! Mabel's irritation increased when she again felt that thrill. What would the average young man in a similar capacity have done, she asked herself? Laughed it down, of course.

Well, if she had been severe, it might turn out to Eddie's advantage after all. It wasn't her fault, exactly, that he had changed his job. He didn't have to quit that nice, soft office position. Why should she worry, with a dance to go to that night? Not on her life!

As for Eddie—he went to his boarding-house, ate a big supper, and immediately went to bed.

In the next few days his landlady discovered that she hadn't saved anything, after all, during Eddie's period of scant portions. For now the meals he ate astounded and alarmed her, and incidentally so pleased the plump Irish waitress that she didn't hesitate to slip him extra helpings of meat and potatoes surreptitiously.

The meetings between Mabel and Eddie during that month were many, but, with the exception of a single Sunday afternoon, they all occurred at the quitting hour, when Mabel managed to get around about the time Eddie was making for the Subway entrance with his lunch-box clutched in one hand and his ticket held ready in the other.

He didn't say much these nights, and he always got off at his own station—never rode further up-town with her, as he had been used to do. Little by little she found herself irritated more and more, not with herself for thinking of Eddie, but with Eddie for not thinking more of her!

Had his professed love for her, then, been a fleeting fickle passion? Had he actually tired of her? None of the others had. She could call any of them to her side with a crook of her little finger, although she didn't feel any very great pride in the thought. She decided to test Eddie out.

"Gee, I ain't been to a dance in a week," she sighed one evening on the way home.

"It's pretty hot yet, if it is September, to dance," was Eddie's paralyzing rejoinder.

She pursed her lips and bid him a haughty "Good-by" that night.

So *that* was it—another girl! When Eddie deliberately turned down her indirect invitation to take her to a dance, it was a sign that his affections had been diverted to another channel. Now that she had convinced herself that she had lost them, Mabel became aware of a disturbing doubt as to whether she really hadn't wanted to hold those affections.

V

MEANWHILE Eddie worked and ate and slept, and at the end of a month of strenuous toil at trucking castings under the casual eye of big Bob Poetter he was suddenly promoted to a better job!

That very Saturday night Mabel listened to his voice over the telephone with a queer jumping of her heart, and with emotions of doubt and pleasure combating for the mastery.

"What say to a good old-fashioned excursion somewhere to-morrow, Mabel?" she heard him suggesting.

She stifled an impulse to accept on the instant, although she had other plans.

"Why, let me see, to-morrow is Sunday, and in the afternoon—"

"About one thirty," Eddie interrupted. "Let's get an early start, Mabel, and go up the Hudson somewhere, where we can see the fall colors of the trees. We'll get supper up there somewhere. One thirty all right?"

She heard herself consenting, and she censured herself severely as she hung up the receiver. He probably couldn't get that new girl of his this Sunday. Oh, well, she'd go, now that she had said she would; but it would be the *last* time.

Next evening, after a wonderful afternoon with nature in her glorious autumn garb, they sat down to dinner in a quiet little inn on the banks of the Hudson. Through the window by their table they could see the sunset streaking its crimson and gold reflections on the placid surface of the wide river. Eddie Warner, a picture of health—stouter, tanned, and appearing very able-bodied indeed—was a fitting and blending contrast with the beauty of his companion.

"Gee, isn't this pretty china!" he commented, as they were served with the main course. "You know if we could get something like this for our—"

He paused and looked at her whimsically. Mabel couldn't help it. She blushed

like a rose in the first glorious sunshine of spring.

"You know, Mabel, I like the work I'm in now. I've received my first promotion, and I'm going to get more. I'm going to study engineering nights, too. And, would you believe it?—I'm already getting more money out there in the yard than I got in the office. I guess I've got you to thank for it, because it was you who really were indirectly—no, *directly*—responsible for my making a change and getting on the right track."

The girl was looking out of the window, where the purple shades of twilight were heralding the night with its coolness and its stars. She spoke ever so softly.

"You were going to say about the china, that we might—"

"Might get something like it for our own home," he said quickly, his pulse leaping.

"I was thinking of a few things, too," she said in a voice so low that he could just catch her words.

"Mabel!"

In a second's time he was around the table. She pushed him back and looked at him with shining eyes.

"Don't, Eddie—the waiters—please!"

In the next half-hour the new home was completely furnished by Eddie's saying:

"There's plenty of time between now and a month from now to attend to that."

To which Mabel agreed; but they seemed to have a great many things to talk

about, most of which concerned themselves, and none of which amounted to a great deal.

But Mabel had something else on her mind.

"Eddie," she finally found the courage to begin, "you say you are studying nights?"

"Not yet, but I'll start after we are married—just an hour or so each night, except Saturdays and Sundays. We'll have plenty of time for a dance now and then, and for the movies."

"But this last month, Eddie, I've hardly seen you. You never would talk to me much going home on the train, and you deliberately turned me down for a dance." This accusingly. "I'll bet you had another—another—"

No, she couldn't get it out; nor could she have made herself heard if she had, for Eddie had broke out laughing heartily.

"You thought there was some other girl?" he choked.

Mabel flushed, and raised her head in indignation.

"Why, sweetheart," he laughed, "this past month I've been so dog-goned tired at night that I couldn't talk to you or take you to a dance on a bet. I couldn't even *think* of any other girl, and hardly of you. What I wanted, deary, was *sleep*! And now I'm coming around that table to do what I started to do regardless of all the waiters on earth!"

Mabel will tell you herself that he did.

THE SENTINEL

LIKE a rosebud new-unfurled,
Half afraid to see
All the wonders of the world
Past her safe rose-tree,
Opening petals in the sun
Slowly, shyly, one by one,
Little waiting, frightened maid,
Wanting life, but half afraid.

Round the garden where you grew,
See, my love's a wall
That will let no fear pass through,
And no harm at all.
Like a sentinel I'll wait
Humbly by the garden gate;
When you've learned to trust in me,
I shall pluck you from your tree!

Mary Carolyn Davies

In the Toils

AN EPISODE IN THE BUSY LIFE OF BERNARDO THE GREAT

By Robert Terry Shannon

THE train had been standing for half an hour without any indication that it was preparing to resume its journey. Carol Lorraine attributed the delay to plain stupidity. She was certain of that—it was a numbskull crew.

"What's the delay, porter?" she demanded of the black boy.

"Engine trouble, miss."

"What place is this?"

"Dis am Solomon, Missouri."

"How much longer are we going to be here?"

On the previous night William McKinley Jackson had emerged from a square-boned fling with fortune in St. Louis richer by one ornate yellow watch. It now rested opulently in his dusky palm.

"Twenty minutes, miss—twenty minutes." His eyes rested proudly on the heavily gilded hands. "Yes, miss, we held hyar twenty minutes moh."

It was warm and stuffy in the Pullman. Thirty hours out from New York, the young woman's lithe body was crying for exercise. There was plenty of time. She threw her silver fox lightly over her shoulders and set her close-fitting hat of black straw on her head.

As she stepped lightly from the steps of the car to the graveled frontage of the Solomon station, her personality communicated itself to the loiterers among the milk-cans and egg-crates; and once again she felt the thrill of commanding masculine attention, even if the observers were but yokels. In the last few years Carol Lorraine had received a great deal of it, but never enough.

There would be ample time, she thought, for a short walk in the fresh spring sunshine, up the main street of Solomon, and past the primitive stores. She breathed deeply of the clean Western air, and a

faint, genuine flush came to her cheeks as she moved along. Those who saw her, men and women, knew that the little town had never before been visited by such luxurious loveliness.

In point of apparel she would have shed luster on Broadway at Forty-Second Street, from the paradise plumage on her smart little hat to the flash of Italian silk stockings that showed above her short-vamp shoes of gray suede. The milky whiteness of her arms was a delight to the eye, for the French sleeves of her navy blue one-piece dress ended just above the elbow. She carried, nonchalantly, her long suede gloves and a gold bag studded at the clasp with diamonds and emeralds.

On the third finger of her left hand there gleamed a solitary emerald of unusual size, which marked the adoration of a millionaire cub. Over and around her was the subtle perfume of violets—an aura of ineffable daintiness that retails at fifty dollars the ounce.

But Carol Lorraine was something more than a clothes-horse. She had beauty of the spot-light kind; dark eyes that flash for the multitude; skin and figure and hair that find their highest appreciation in the sight of those who love the pictorial.

The theater, with its glittering tributes, had been unable to retain her. Out in California the salaries of the speaking stage were being tripled and quadrupled by the motion pictures. Carol had held off, but the movies wanted her; and they get what they want, although she had the distinct pleasure of making even the money-hardened magnates glower and yield, at last, to the figure she demanded.

According to the cunningly written articles in the newspapers, Carol Lorraine was of French birth, a convent-educated girl who had mastered English with phenome-

nal rapidity, and who had burst upon Broadway like a gorgeous butterfly to dazzle all with her supreme art. The eager public had accepted this picturesque story; but as a matter of fact her early career had been quite a different one.

On this warm spring day she wandered about the main street of Solomon and asked herself how, in the old days, she had managed to endure her life in such places. The atrocious country hotels with their bowls and pitchers; the night jumps from one tank town to another; the discomfort of it and the futility of it! She recalled that the "Sultan of Egypt" company had played a string of one-night stands through Missouri, only five years before. It seemed unbelievable.

In those ancient times a chorus girl on the road lived on eighteen dollars a week. Always there had been the crowd around the stage door of the up-stairs opera-house, eager to speak to a girl, to buy her perfume in the drug-store, to treat her to an ill-cooked, unpalatable meal in a smoky little restaurant. She shuddered. Their hard, red hands, their shoddy clothes, the silver dollars jingling in their pockets! Yet somehow she had tolerated their company for a supper; even for a needed cake of soap or a box of powder.

The towns were all alike. She fancied they must have been stamped from a single die. Solomon boasted the Commercial House, the *Argus* office, the Busy Bee Café, H. J. Tarbell's general merchandise emporium, and Vaughan's drug-store, which also dispensed paints and glass. Other signs on Main Street were those of Powell, the harness man; Milton Greathouse, hay and feed; Josie Trimbull, milliner, and the Day and Night Garage.

A broad outside flight of stairs, muddy with the tramping of many feet, ascended the side of a building on a corner, the lower floor of which was occupied by the August Ebner Furniture Company—"funerals a specialty." The garish posters on the side of the building were not necessary to inform Miss Lorraine that up-stairs was the opera-house.

The form on the bills was "Bernardo the Great, Prince of Mystery and Master of Magic." Solomon was a week stand for the itinerant hypnotist and prestidigitator. The crude lithograph showed him in a fixed pose of concentration, long-haired, dark-eyed, lean-featured.

Carol was immensely thankful to remember that she would be rolling westward and away from the town and all it represented in her life before the small-time showman made his bow on the dingy little stage that night.

She glanced at her tiny watch. Seven minutes remained in which to stroll leisurely back to the station.

When she arrived she caught sight of a trailing plume of white smoke on the horizon, marking the course of the departing train. The porter, carried away by the splendor of his new timepiece, had relied entirely upon imagination in estimating the duration of the train's delay.

II

TAKING his daily exercise in the form of walking, Bernardo was combining healthful exertion with business. He was "mixing." He had been in town half a week, and already he was on terms of friendship with most of the men, women, and children—and all of the dogs—in Solomon. It helped him professionally. To stop for a chat with a man in a town where no one was in a hurry promoted good-will and engendered a bond of sympathy that was of great assistance in giving a successful performance. Innate gallantry kept him lifting his broad-brimmed hat to ladies who were flattered by the courtesy of the distinguished stranger; and to pet a child or a dog was a fundamental part of the man's nature.

Yet, like the true trouser he was, he never descended to familiarity. None of his clients, as he called them, ever quite penetrated the barrier of mystery that was as much a part of him off the stage as on it. Always, at the last, there was the shade of reserve that never melted.

Quietly, but with his soul in sudden turmoil, Milt Greathouse stood shrinking in the doorway of his store as he watched for the mountebank to appear. His vigil ended with the sauntering approach of the hypnotist. Milt called to him with dry lips.

"Bernardo," he said, as he drew him into the narrow doorway, "I want to talk to you. You're the only man what I *can* talk to!"

A lesser student of human nature than Bernardo the Great would have had little difficulty in grasping immediately that Milt was on the rack. The hay-dealer's hulking figure was sagging, and in his list-

less blue eyes there was the bright look of a hunted creature.

"Come in the back part of the store," he urged, as he led the way through a door in the thin partition and into a barnlike space where baled hay, clean and fragrant, was piled to the roof. He motioned toward a detached bale.

"Set down."

Bernardo sat there in silence, until the disturbed Solomonite dropped beside him after a wholly unnecessary search to convince himself that there were no possible eavesdroppers.

"Bernardo, I'm going to make a clean breast of everything. I s'pose you're wonderin' why I come to you, ain't you?"

The sage was thoughtful.

"No." He spoke slowly, with the solemnity befitting the confessional. "In my time many people have come to me."

He passed a hand over his brow—a gesture that might have indicated the soothing of a great brain, bringing it to a condition of receptivity.

"You're a man of the world, Bernardo, and you understand things that the people here in this town couldn't. Besides, you're here to-day and gone to-morrow, and I can talk to you and—well, it ain't goin' to ruin my good name. Over and above all that, if there's any man alive what can help me, you're the man, Bernardo, and I'm askin' your help."

"That remains to judge," the visitor declared. "I shall follow the dictates of practical wisdom and the intuitive reactions of the super-ego."

It was a heavy speech, and it achieved an impression.

"If I was a single man it wouldn't matter so much, I guess. You met my wife, didn't you?"

Bernardo nodded.

"A remarkably fine little woman," he said graciously.

"Yes; she's little, but she's mighty. Been a good wife to me, but she's jealous as all git out!"

"No!"

"Yep. We been married three years, and she ain't got over the fact yet that I was engaged to a girl when I was eighteen years old. But that ain't it, Bernardo. If the missus ever gets wind of this, she'll skin me alive. You don't know that little woman. I'm like a man a settin' on top of a volcano!"

Bernardo crossed his long legs and clasped his hands over his knee. It was an attitude of patience.

"Wild oats—that's the story in a nutshell. Youthful folly and indiscretion. To look at me workin' every day around this here feed-store, you wouldn't think I was a man with a past, would you?"

"Men are seldom what they seem."

"And now I'm in the toils," he wailed.

"I danced, and I guess I'll have to pay the fiddler. Five years ago they was a girl show come to this town. It was one of them big travelin' shows. I guess there must 'a' been eight or ten girls in it, dressed up in tights and spangles."

If Milt hoped to see a reflection of his own anguish on Bernardo's face, he was disappointed.

"I was single then," he continued, "and I took up with one of them women. I winked at her on the street after the show that night. I ain't goin' to conceal nothin' from you, Bernardo. I took her down to the restaurant and we had a big meal—and I made love to her."

The master mind interrupted.

"Just a minute, Greathouse—did you sign any papers?"

"Nope. Jest talked—foolishness, mostly, but I was kind of excited about her, and I asked her to marry me."

"And her answer?"

"Bernardo, I think she loved me all right, but she was too proud to admit it. I can shut my eyes and see her now. She was eatin' an oyster stew, and all through the talk she was maskin' her feelin's."

"But she must have made some reply to your proposal?"

"Sure! She said, 'Quit your kiddin',' and things like that; but I could see she was strugglin' with her real sentiments. I was a poor man then, and you know what big salaries them actresses get."

Bernardo knew—none better!

"I carried her satchel down to the train, and she was sympathetic to the last. When the train pulled out, she yelled somethin' back to me. 'Ta, ta, you poor—' she began, but I don't know what else she said, 'cause the train drowned out her words. And that was the last I ever seen of her—until to-day!"

As a man revolving a ponderous question in his mind, Bernardo wrinkled his forehead in concentration before he uttered an opinion.

"In my judgment," he said at last, "a high flier always tempts Providence."

Milt Greathouse lifted a helpless, pathetic face.

"She's back—got in on the limited this afternoon. She's been walkin' back and forth in front of the store almost all afternoon, lookin' in! I recognized her in a minute, and she seen me, too, but she didn't let on that she knew me. I think she's goin' to sue!"

"Or shoot."

"Great crickety, Bernardo, you don't think she'll do that?"

"They have been known to. Woman, frail as she may seem, is apt to be emotional, excitable, impetuous, especially when her affections have been tampered with."

"Yes, I know," Milt admitted lugubriously. "I'm married!"

"There is this consolation for you, however—you've told me now, and it's off your mind."

Bernardo rose.

"Off my mind! Say, it ain't been off my mind for a second since I laid eyes on her. I can scarcely wait on what trade comes in this afternoon. I tell you, Bernardo, I need help, and I need it bad. You got a winnin', understandin' way about you, and I'm askin' you, man to man, can you do anything for me?"

The two men returned to the front of the building.

"I'm appealin' to you like as if you was a lodge brother of mine, which of course you ain't."

Milt's eyes moved rapidly over Bernardo's hands, watch-fob, and coat lapel. The wise man rested a comforting hand on the sinner's shoulder.

"All men," he said softly, "should be brothers."

And then the face of Milt Greathouse grew ashen as he gazed out of the window. Bernardo, too, beheld the vision of fashion and beauty marching straight on the store, with her regal countenance darkened by deep feeling. There was no mistaking her destination.

Milt neither asked nor waited for advice. With a celerity he had never shown in business, he went plunging through the back door and into the herbage gloom of the rear; there to conceal himself in the most darksome corner to quail from merited retribution.

Bernardo the Great, hat in hand, received the lady.

III

WHEN she had gone, and Bernardo had watched her across the square until she disappeared into the Commercial House, he made his way to the hiding-place and lured Milt into the open.

"For crickety's sake, Bernardo, what did she say? Tell me the worst!"

"Wild oats, wild oats," the mystic murmured, ignoring the burning question. "You say you love your wife, Greathouse?"

"I do, Bernardo. Maybe I ain't never showed it much since we been married, but I sure do love that little woman!"

Bernardo sensed that the man's suddenly aroused affection for his wife was due to just about three years of selfishness and neglect such as only a small, cowardly mind is capable of inflicting; and also to the fact that he was in danger of losing a capable—and cheap—housekeeper and cook. His great, luminous eyes seemed to glow with new feeling.

"Tell me," he demanded, "have you made your wife happy?"

Milt was too much agitated to note the significance of the question.

"Tell me the worst, Bernardo; spare me nothin'!"

But the master was slow to answer. It was in these moments when human feeling reached a high pitch that he had surges of a mighty instinct, as if his own perception became keener in the presence of another's mind at a great tension. There was no doubt of the perturbation that was torturing whatever soul Milt Greathouse happened to possess.

"My friend," he said finally, "you need a strong hand to back you up. You've invited me to your assistance. Very well, I consent; but you must place the case entirely in my hands. Otherwise—"

The victim of folly was only too eager to agree.

"I'm completely willin'," he cried—"willin' and grateful. Only tell me what she said."

His request was met with a melancholy, negative smile.

"No, Milt, as you have spoken to me in confidence, so it was with her. My lips, for the present, are sealed. Later, maybe—" He tossed one hand aloft and

snapped his fingers. "Later, anything may happen."

The lump that seemed to rise and plug Milt's throat had to be swallowed before he could speak.

"I love her!" he said. "I love every hair on her head!"

"You love her!"

"My wife, I mean—not that actress woman, with all her beauty and riches. I love Martha, my wife, and I'm darn close to losin' her this minute, Bernardo—*darn* close!"

Bernardo lit a long, slender cigar and exhaled a swirling mass of smoke before he answered.

"Do you think—do you think you could get me out of this trouble?" Milt pleaded softly, desperately, as an accused criminal might fling his fate upon the powers of his lawyer.

"My boy," said the hypnotist, "if I deem it worth while, I can. Yet it may all be for the best as it stands now."

"Don't say that!"

"Nevertheless, it is true, my friend, too true. It is the old, old story. The other woman, the dark past, the trusting wife—that is a mixture which has toppled many a hearthstone since man first engaged in the endless battle between his baser and his better selves. It is fortunate, Milton, that you called upon me. Wait—trust—hope!"

For Milt, the words of the mystic were fraught with small consolation.

"But what shall I do?" he asked.

"Nothing—absolutely nothing. Your future, the future of the three of you, hangs in the balance. It is a problem for the eternal laws of compensation. Knowing something of those laws, being gifted with knowledge of the subtle workings of the human mind, I shall take up this problem, since you insist, and try to reach a solution. I shall discover the most scientific sum total of the diverse elements now seething and working, invisible to the eye, yet as potent as the magnetic attraction that keeps the solar system tracking forever in the grooves of time."

Milt nodded an agreement.

"It's fierce," he admitted, "involvin' all them things you just said."

Bernardo drew his watch from his pocket, glanced at it, and returned it deliberately.

"Get your hat, Milt. We're going up

to your house to talk to that little wife of yours."

For a moment a mighty terror shook the Lothario of the feed-store.

"About—about—"

"In a case like this I always have an interview with the wife."

"You won't say nothin' about *her*?"

"That," said Bernardo, "is a matter which at the moment I am unprepared to answer. Come!"

IV

TOGETHER they made their way to the Greathouse home. For Milt it was a poignant moment—the calm before the storm. Bernardo, however, was as serene as if no strife existed in this seething world. He stopped to pat a curly haired youngster on the head, to pick a posy for his lapel, to raise his hat and exchange greetings with a grandmotherly soul who was carrying a basket of eggs for barter to the grocery. He was, in short, enjoying the afternoon sunshine of a small town.

Milt Greathouse lived in a little white cottage with a white picket fence around it, hollyhocks in the front yard, and a stone-paved walk leading up to the narrow porch. As they turned in at the gate, the solemn rhythm of "Rock of Ages" rolled from an organ within.

"My father-in-law give it to us," Milt explained. "Martha's quite a musician on it—plays all the hymns." He stopped and grasped Bernardo's arm. "I'm trustin' your judgment in this affair." It was an eloquent plea.

"Greathouse," said Bernardo, as they halted outside, "if I were in your situation—if I had a little home and a wife like you have—I'd be prepared to go to any length to save them. Are you?"

"You bet I am!"

They entered, and Martha Greathouse, flustered, pleased, and mystified, rose from the organ nervously to greet them. By that curious law which compels like to choose unlike, she was as small as her husband was bulky, as highly strung as he, at the other extreme, was phlegmatic.

"Milt wanted me to come up to the house to visit a spell with you all," Bernardo remarked to her with a magnetic smile. "He's been telling me what a fine little wife he had, and nothing would do him but that I should come up and hear you play the organ."

She stared at her mate with incredulous eyes.

"Well, if that ain't Milt to a tee!" she said, half in exasperation. "Always doin' what you'd least expect! He knows I can't play nothin' but hymns. Now if he'd asked you to supper, we'd 'a' had strawberry shortcake, and—" She shook her head sadly at the author of her vexation. "But set down, Mr. Bernardo. Milt, bring him in a glass of cider."

"My wife," remarked Milt for no apparent reason, "is the best cook in Douglas County. She can make a cherry pie that lays out anything you ever set tooth to. See them roses on that wall? Painted that picture herself at the age of fourteen!"

"Very fine," Bernardo agreed politely, if not sincerely.

"Makes her own hats and dresses, too. Reckon she's saved me nigh onto a hundred dollars since we been married. Ain't never been sick in her life, nuther, since I've had her. Waits on me hand and foot. Always ties my necktie, and—"

"Milt!"

"Yes, Martha?"

"Milt Greathouse, have you gone plumb crazy, tellin' all that foolishness to Mr. Bernardo?"

The lump in Milt's throat rose again, a mist blurred his eyes, and somewhere in the massive bosom a pain cut like a knife. For a moment he was unable to speak, then he blurted:

"Darn it, Martha, I love you more than you'll ever know. Whatever happens, I'll always love you!"

The heavy body wheeled slowly and left the room.

"I'm goin' back to the store," he said in farewell. "Mr. Bernardo wants to talk to you."

Through the open window she watched his shuffling step down the street before she or her visitor spoke. She was a plain little woman, wiry and neat.

"Well, what's up?" she asked curtly.

With it thus checked squarely up to him, Bernardo beamed upon her.

"Madam," he said softly, "I congratulate you upon being a well-loved wife!"

"Yes, I know that; but what's the matter with Milt?"

"An awakening, that's what's the matter with Milt. I'll tell you. I dropped in to chat with him, and somehow our talk turned to courtship and one thing and an-

other—and love. He seemed to grow aware suddenly that you meant the very essence of life to him. It was one of those miraculous moments when a man realizes with overpowering force that which he has known before, yet never so intensely. It is difficult for me to explain it to you, Mrs. Greathouse. It strikes me that some chance remark touched off a veritable powder-magazine of affection within him. It was as if he had stumbled upon a great truth, if you know what I mean."

As Bernardo spoke, something of the tenseness that seemed a part of the little wife relaxed. Apprehension faded, and in its place there came an ineffable happiness, elusive, yet positive.

"Why, Milt was never like that before—that is, since we been married. He's been a good provider, Mr. Bernardo, but he never was much of a hand at—at love-making. I'm the only one of my sisters that got married without an engagement ring. Sally's cost a hundred dollars. I ain't sayin' this ag'in' Milt. I guess he just forgot it."

For an instant her voice faltered.

"We're a funny couple, I guess. We're alike in some things, then again we ain't. Milt's a great hand for makin' money. He has his store, and a hundred-and-sixty-acre farm, and all of that, but—well, I guess I'm kind of foolish and sentimental. I just can't forget about that ring; but you know how some men are. They don't see things like a woman does."

Her guard was down. She had spoken without realizing what intimate secrets she was betraying. She checked herself.

"Won't you have a bite of somethin' to eat?" she inquired awkwardly.

Bernardo rose to go.

"No, thanks," he said. "I never eat between meals. I'll bid you good afternoon, Mrs. Greathouse. Hope to see you at the performance again before my engagement closes."

With all his natural gallantry he took his departure. The housewife told herself that he certainly must be a great man, for he left her with the same feeling that she had once experienced when she had shaken hands with a Senator.

V

AN hour later, Bernardo returned to the feed-store. Before that, however, he had stopped to peer in at the window of the

jewelry-store, and, seemingly satisfied, he had gone on toward the hotel. There he learned from the proprietor that a Miss Lorraine had engaged a room until midnight, when she was to take the westward-bound train. She had inquired if there was a news-stand in town, and upon being assured that there was, she had gone there and returned with a sheaf of magazines. The proprietor assumed that she was reading them in her room.

For a time Bernardo occupied himself in the small, untidy lobby with a cigar. A traveling salesman who sought to engage him in conversation was thwarted with an unresponsiveness that was adamant. His mind was plotting. As he schemed, he unconsciously performed a series of minor tricks. Without knowing it, he blew perfect smoke-rings. Idly, he manipulated a half-dollar between his fingers, palming it and passing it out of sight and causing it to reappear. His hand wandered to a pack of cards on a table beside his chair, and his knowing fingers split and cut and restored the pack with a skill that had become reflex action.

"Who's that old bird over there with the Prince Albert coat?" the salesman asked the hotel man. "I spoke to him, and he was too stuck-up to answer me."

But the host had no sympathy for his commercial guest.

"That's Bernardo the Great," he said; "and if there's one thing he *ain't*, it's stuck-up. Can't you see he's thinkin'?" With an independence born of the knowledge that his hotel was the only one in town, he added meaningly: "He's a *real* gentleman, and I know 'em when I see 'em, too!"

The salesman snorted.

"Well, he looks a lot like Lincoln, but they called him Honest Abe. I'll bet nobody ever called that sap over there Honest Bennie, all right, all right!"

But Bernardo heard them not. He had sought the answer to his problem and found it. Always, when he was puzzled, he had found that the concentration of which he spoke so glibly in his theatrical speeches on the mental sciences was, in reality, the sure and certain key to any situation with which his mind chose to grapple. Always he found the way.

When he returned to the feed-store, there was a set, hard expression on his lean, distinguished face. Quailing before the rigid

dignity of his ambassador, the proprietor emitted his breath in short, gaspy puffs.

"Greathouse," Bernardo said coldly, "you asked me to get you out of this mess. It's a *nasty* mess. Your actress is still in town."

Ashen lips framed a trembling query:

"What's she goin' to do?"

"That depends on you, my man." The burning eyes of the great one had cooled until they were frigid wells of accusation. His wide mouth curled upward in a cruelty of expression that froze the hay-dealer's selfish egotism into a hard, frosty pin-point of tingling terror. "She's bitter. Your future is at stake; it's ruin or money!"

"Blackmail!"

Bernardo grunted in disgust.

"When she makes her story public—when this town learns how you've treated your wife—they'll ride you on a rail. Bah!"

He turned away, but Greathouse seized him with palsied hands.

"Can't a man repent?" he cried, agonized. "I'd give every cent I own to spare my little woman the shame of it!"

The quacksalver stifled a quick surge of pity—of understanding.

"She wants five hundred dollars," he said evenly. "She's got a little diamond ring she wants to sell—see? That's the game, and you're the patsy. Dig up the five hundred, and she hits the first rattler out of town. That's all—but you can't hesitate. You come across right now, or she brings suit."

A shining light, as from a lantern cleaned of soot, shone on the broad face of Milt Greathouse.

"Only five hundred dollars—*only* five hundred?" he gurgled.

"That's all—but quick!"

A limp handkerchief sopped at his damp brow. He quivered like a huge pudding on a rickety table. Some emotion, too confused for utterance, burned and glowed within until the man was aflame with a passion to set himself right with his own conscience. The recollection of a thousand petty neglects, of a host of contemptible omissions—

"Bernardo, wait! Just wait here till I hurry down to the bank. You—you've made me see things in a new light—in a light that is settin' me on fire. I'm such an ornery critter—"

Bernardo lifted a suave, commanding

hand into the air. His face, graven with something at once aloof and benign, appeared to the bulging eyes of Milt Great-house to shine with the glittering wisdom of the ages, the saving power of some anointed healer sent by an all-merciful Providence. Breathlessly he waited for the wanderer to speak.

"Go thy way and sin no more."

Secretly, Bernardo was wondering how business would be in the next town. For him, the episode of the hay-store was finished. Only the final curtain remained to fall. Already it was rustling in the flies.

VI

WITH the five hundred dollars in crisp notes securely in his wallet, Bernardo demanded of Mr. Eustace Hawley, the jeweler, the best bargain in the shop.

"I pay cash—five hundred dollars," he proclaimed in flat frankness. "Also, I know stones. This ring has got to be as pure as the morning dew and as radiant as the desert sunshine. I pay cash and I don't quibble. You get your money here and now. Do we do business?"

Hawley had been holding the gem at six hundred dollars—a beauty set in platinum, which the jeweler had hoped to dispose of to some romantic and prosperous swain. The deal was a close one—a mere shaving of profit. He hesitated, caught a flash of yellow-backs, and capitulated.

In the dim light of the hay barn the ring glittered like a speck of eternal energy cut

out of the sun itself. Milt picked it with clumsy fingers from Bernardo's smooth palm and held it inside of a cupped hand, that he might better appreciate its fire.

"It's like *her*," he asserted softly. "Clean and pure—and beautiful! It 'll look wonderful on Martha's finger!"

There rushed across Bernardo's consciousness a vision of the tired, patient woman who had waited year after year for just such a pledge of love; who had crushed her pride into silence, and had, in the face of the negative cruelty that grinds women into pulpy indifference, kept her love beaming as brightly as the stone itself. Something of which he was ashamed welled in his eyes. He snorted into a handkerchief and strode majestically from the place.

VII

IN Los Angeles Miss Lorraine, gorgeous amid the silver and linen of the Alexandria's dining-room, chatted with a youthful millionaire.

"Oh, it was an unspeakable place! There was a broken-down old trouser—a hypnotist or something—who helped me get right out of town. He told me there were twenty-three cases of *smallpox* there, and they were going to quarantine it the next morning, for months and months—the *whole town*!"

She sighed.

"I'll tell you something, Freddie—they small-town people ain't scarcely human. Ugh!"

THE MAGNETIC SOUTH

I've called it the spell of the Capricorn,
That something which sets me a longing to go
Beyond the equator, beyond and below
To the Cape, Mauritius, Tahiti, the Horn.

For years I have felt it a clinging and tugging,
Riding me like the *Old Man of the Sea*.
I cannot dislodge it by coaxing or shrugging;
Must I turn *Sindbad* to set myself free?

Has it been woven by marvelous tales
Of the voyages made by Bougainville, Cook?
Nothing so gripping is born of a book,
Or has ever been spun by the magic of sails.

It is a power too mighty to wheedle;
It cheers and uplifts me when down in the mouth;
China is right when it claims that the needle
Is pointing, not to the north, but the south!

Richard Butler Glaenser

The Waster

THE STORY OF A PRODIGAL BROTHER'S DRAMATIC RETURN

By Thomas Addison

HORACE BLAKE'S wife called him up at his office just after twelve o'clock on Tuesday. An odd breathlessness was in her voice.

"Betty is here," she announced; "and I want you to come home to lunch."

"I can't. Tell Betty I'm glad she's back. I'll see her at dinner."

"You must come now, Horace. I have a surprise for you. Your brother Nat is here. He came on the same train—in the same car."

"Good Lord!" Blake's voice leaped up an octave.

"Nat was able to do some little service for Betty," Jane continued, "and it led to mutual discoveries. They were fast friends when I met the train. He is not married, Betty says."

"Jane!" Blake drew the transmitter closer. "Tell me this—how does Nat look?"

"He's a big, strong, handsome man, with the bluest of blue eyes—"

"Bosh!" interjected Blake rudely. "Does he look prosperous or down at the heel?"

"He looks—why, Horace, how can I say? He looks like a gentleman. Little Joe took to him at once. You are coming, of course—your only brother, and after ten years!"

"Oh, I'm coming," Blake said, and ended the colloquy.

He sat for a while glooming at his thoughts—a dark, thin, harried-looking man close to forty. A few days before he had received a postal from Nat in New York. It said:

DEAR HORACE:

Home from a foreign shore! I came across a chap a day or two ago who told me that you were married and had a boy. I am going to run out to Bradford soon for a look at my little nephew.

NAT.

That was all. In ten years it was but the second word Blake had had from this younger brother of his, since Nat went away to rove the face of the globe. The other was a letter received a few months ago from somewhere in Brazil—a brief, bald statement to the effect that Nat could make a lot of money for him if he would put twenty thousand dollars into a deal Nat was nursing. Only that—no details, no mention even of the character of the deal—nothing but a harebrained, loose-handed boy's word to go on!

Blake sniffed sourly. Well, Nat had got a sharp "No" for answer, and reference to a familiar proverb to clinch it.

And now here he was home again, and in all likelihood stone broke. He was coming to Bradford to beg for a loan—that was it. He could have no other object, for God knew there never had been any love lost between them. What he said about little Joe was a mere flimsy excuse to cover his real errand.

Blake's thought leaped suddenly to Betty Sinclair, his wife's orphaned niece. She had come to live with them during the past year, and had entrusted to him the management of her small inheritance. The girl had gone to New York for a week's shopping, and as some devil of mischance would have it Nat had been thrown in with her on her way back. And Nat was not married!

A bead of cold sweat oozed out on Blake's forehead and dropped to his hand. He shook it off as if it had stung him, and set out for his house.

He found Nat in the living-room, with little Joe sitting on his knee and bubbling with delight over a story of the attempt of a rabbit to climb a tall tree on the topmost branches of which wonderful carrots were said to grow. Betty Sinclair, a slender young woman with a warm, bright, sensitive face, was laughing with the child.

Jane, fair-haired, placid, with calm, unemotional eyes, was seated near by.

Blake, who had entered quietly, paused in the doorway. Nat glanced up and nodded to him across the room.

"Hello, Horry!" he said, as casually as if they had parted the day before.

He put the boy down and shook hands with his brother. Jane looked on with a curious creasing of her smooth forehead.

"It's a long time since we've seen each other, Nathaniel," replied Horace Blake dispassionately.

The big blond man smiled at his brother whimsically.

"The bad penny always comes back, Horry. It's one of the immutable laws of finance."

"Well, I declare! Two long-lost brothers meet, and only this!"

It was Betty, tumultuously exclamatory. Nat turned to her.

"You judge from externals, Miss Sinclair. Within us the wells of fraternal affection are deeply stirred. Isn't it so, Horry?"

"Precisely so," he answered with a careful smile.

Jane rose.

"Shall we go into lunch?" she suggested blandly.

II

WHEN Horace Blake at last had Nat to himself behind the door of his library, he attempted the regretful air of a thwarted hospitality.

"Sorry I haven't cigars to offer, but as you may remember I don't smoke," he remarked.

"Yes, I remember." Nat's mouth twitched humorously. "A beastly habit, and expensive."

As he spoke, he took from his pocket a black concha. Now he lit it, crossed his long legs comfortably, and grinned at his brother through the smoke.

"Every man to his taste," said the other shortly. "How long have you been on this side of the water?"

"A week."

"In New York?"

"Mostly."

Blake reflected on this a moment. Then he asked:

"It was some one there who put you in mind of me?"

Nat waved his cigar deprecatingly.

"I wouldn't exactly confess to that, Horry. I've dwelt on you occasionally when I was particularly low in spirit and desperate for a cheering thought."

Blake ignored this pleasantry.

"Well, who was he, this man?" he persisted. "Some one from here?"

Nat consulted the ceiling.

"Let me see! No, he wasn't from Bradford. What the deuce did he call himself? Oh, well, say it was Brown. When he learned my name, he asked if I was related to you. I acknowledged my guilt, and we passed to happier themes."

Blake studied him openly for some seconds. Aside from simple gold cuff-links Nat's person was unadorned, though in boyhood, as Blake recalled, he had been given to trinkets.

"Well," he questioned with cold incisiveness, "now that you are here, what do you expect to do? You have grown away from your old acquaintances."

Nat's whimsical smile flashed at him.

"By George, your welcome warms me, Horry! It is worth coming back to. I say, old man, I shouldn't be astonished to hear that you're chairman of the Old Home Week committee."

"Nat"—Blake's mouth drew down disagreeably—"I'm not going to put on with you. We never were anything to each other. We never thought alike on a single thing. For the sake of the proprieties I suppose I've got to make something over you in public—"

"But in private you'll be damned if you do," interjected Nat, grinning. "Bully for you, Horry! You haven't changed—like the leopard. Cut loose, beloved brother. I've come a long way to hear you."

"I will, by Heaven!" said Blake intensely. "What the devil are you here for? Out with it! Let us understand each other."

"The impossible seldom happens," murmured Nat. "In my card from New York I believe I mentioned that I was coming to get acquainted with my little nephew."

Blake made an impatient gesture.

"You expect me to credit that?"

"Certainly not. Suppose I say, then, that I have come to bask in the evident prosperity that surrounds you."

"Ah!" Blake looked away out of the window. The blue eyes across the table searched the averted face, and dropped as

it turned again. "Broke, of course!" commented Blake mordantly.

Nat sighed.

"You know the old proverb, Horry—a rolling stone gathers no moss."

Horace Blake plopped his arms down on the table, leaned heavily on them, and with jaw hard-set and thrust forward, spoke his mind.

"Your share of our father's estate was fifty thousand dollars. You took it and went roistering around the world. Ten years! God knows what you've been up to; I won't ask, for I don't care. You are no better than a stranger, and have no more than a stranger's claim on me. So—get this straight—if you are hoping to borrow money of me to keep you going, I'll tell you now, and be done with it, that I haven't a dollar to spare for you. Unless," he added ironically, "it's to pay your way out of town."

Nat carefully removed the ash from his cigar into an onyx bowl on the table.

"Well, that's something," he agreed cheerfully. "But how comes it that you are so hard up, Horace? Miss Sinclair told me that you had a ripping business—making money like the mint."

"I did not say I was hard up," Blake spat the words out savagely. "I said—"

"You hadn't a dollar to spare, I understood," interjected Nat with uplifted brows.

"For you," Blake rasped. "Do you get me? For you! You have had your cake and eaten it; you'll not have any of mine. I'm not running a home for wasters. And a word about Betty Sinclair," he added. "She's young. She's impulsive. And you—we don't know what you are. I'll just say that Miss Sinclair is under my protection, and I'll not allow—"

"I'd stop there, if I were you," said Nat Blake very quietly.

Horace stopped. There was a compelling quality in that quiet voice that constrained him. The room was heavily still. From somewhere in the grounds about the house a child's voice rang out.

"You were saying," continued Nat in another tone, "that I've had my cake and eaten it; I'm not to look for a share of yours. It's something I had no right to expect, yet I hoped you wouldn't quite say that. I came here, Horace, with two objects in view. One I have already stated. I'm not married—haven't had time for it—and I was pricked with the desire to lay

hold of a living tie of blood and affection in the person of this little nephew of mine. The thought somehow caught at me—"

He broke off. Blake, staring cynically, waited for him to proceed. Presently he did so.

"You've pictured me as roistering about the world. I won't take the trouble to disabuse you. I'll only say I've been alone a good deal—solitary months on end in wild countries—and a man gets to have a craving for his own blood—"

Again he stayed himself, this time with a curt laugh.

"Oh, the deuce!" he finished abruptly. "You wouldn't understand. It's not in you."

Blake passed this over with a disparaging grunt.

"The other object?" he catechized. "You said you had two."

Suspicion of he knew not what tinged Horace Blake's voice. Nat's face, all at once, had taken on a curious change—an expression of gratified surprise. He sat forward, his eyes pinned on his brother as if to invite him to share his wonderment.

"My word!" he exclaimed. "Isn't it remarkable how things pop into your mind when you are thinking of something else? That chap I met in New York—name is Abbott, of Corliss, Abbott & Lee, Pine Street—Arthur Abbott. Tall, smooth-shaven, nose-glasses—I say, what's the matter with you, Horace?"

Horace, whitening slowly, had slumped back in his chair.

"What's the matter with you?" repeated Nat, rising. "Are you ill?"

"Yes," Blake muttered. "A faintness. I—I'm subject to it."

Nat did not offer to go around to him. He stood where he had risen.

"Anything I can do for you—anything?" he asked.

"No. It will pass. And—oh, clear out, will you? I'll talk with you later."

"Sure there's nothing I can do to help?" Nat was cryptically persistent. "If you'd open up to me, perhaps—"

But Horace waved him away, and he turned to the door and went out.

III

HORACE came home to lunch again on Wednesday. While he had vigilantly avoided another closeted interview with Nat, he seemed morbidly desirous of keep-

ing track of him. He found Jane alone in the house. She was not expecting him.

"Where are the others?" he questioned.

"They are out in the car," she told him. "Nat wished to visit some of his old haunts. Joe is with them. They will lunch at Crestwood."

"Why didn't you go?"

"I had letters to write, and"—she smiled a little—"I was not irresistibly urged to go."

Ordinarily Blake was at no loss for words in freeing his mind to his wife. His attitude toward her, toward all in his household, hinted of the patriarchal, of one who ruled by ordained and superior right. Jane, with her temperamental tendency to follow the line of least resistance, had insensibly fallen into acceptance of her husband's somewhat dictatorial pose, and the more readily because on the rare occasions when she chose to assert herself he invariably gave way to her.

To-day Horace seemed to lack somewhat of his air of arrogated supremacy. He moved about restlessly, uncertainly, and at last brought up by his wife, who was seated at an escritoire in the corner. He spoke hesitantly, his tone strangely mild.

"Jane, do you think it quite—er—prudent to let Betty and Nat be thrown together in this way?"

"Prudent!" She finished addressing an envelope before going on. "What can be imprudent in it, Horace?"

"A great deal. You have never met Nat until now. You don't know him, Jane." He gained fluency as he proceeded. "Nat—I've told you this before—is a scatter-brain and a waster. Now I will tell you something more. He has run through his money. He's broke! I found that out last night. What else he is, what loose habits have fastened on him, what ties he may have formed of which we know absolutely nothing—"

Jane looked up at him with grave, disapproving eyes.

"Horace, you are speaking of your brother!"

"Well! Because two are born of one mother, must they go through life like moles as to each other's faults?"

"Some day Joe may have a brother," she said to him quietly. "Would you wish—"

But he interposed with a sudden passionate vehemence that startled her.

"Ah, Joe! It is of him I'm thinking, and of you, of Betty. I am driven to speak. There is no other way."

He took a few steps about the room in an effort at self-control. Jane's electrified gaze followed him. A vague premonition of calamity to fall quickened her tranquil pulse. Blake returned to her side. He strove for a level voice, even attempted a thin smile.

"I'm not just well, my dear; and I've had a lot of worry lately. I guess it has told on me. Er—about Nat. He will be going away again in a day or two. If you could manage to be present—er—to go along on these outings, you know, it would please me."

Jane's head moved slightly in negation.

"You must give me a valid reason, Horace—better than any thus far. Betty is her own mistress. Nat is a gentleman, whatever else his failings. I certainly shall not intrude on them unwarrantably."

It was the breaking-point with the man, it appeared. He went to pieces as a house of cards falls apart at a breath.

"Ah, I am driven to it!" he cried in a choking voice. "I would have spared you, but now—listen! Listen carefully, Jane. If those two decide to marry, I am ruined. Nat would persuade Betty to transfer her interests to his hands. Then—up we'd go in smoke—all of us! Do you wish that to happen, or will you try, with me, to prevent it?"

Jane sat rigidly still, her eyes wide, wondering, incredulous. Had he aimed a blow at her with his fist she could have been but little more confounded.

"Can't you speak?" demanded Blake, after a racking pause.

"I do not understand, Horace," she forced herself to say. "I am baffled. You must make it clear to me."

"Very well, I will," he rejoined desperately. "I saw the chance to make a fortune, not so much for myself as for Joe—mainly for Joe. I dreamed of handing down to him place and power, all that great resources make for. I wanted him to be known among men. I wanted—oh, my God, what is the use? You must know—you do know, without the telling—what my hopes are in that boy!"

"And yet, Horace, you have not explained it."

Jane's voice, sounding flat and dead, urged him on.

"I am coming to it," he continued, bracing himself to the task. "It was in rubber—the investment. There is a world demand for it, and growing with every day. I put all I had in it—the returns would be enormous—and then I found that to protect me more money was needed. I did not know where to look for it—my banking credit was exhausted—and so I—I put Betty's money in. It was just to tide me over, to give me time till the market rallied, and it will—it must—shortly; but just now—if I'm interfered with—if I am made to settle—"

The tumultuous flow of words ran dry. Blake was spent. He sank heavily into a chair, and, resting his elbows on his knees, let his face drop in his hands.

Jane sat stunned under the impact of this shocking revelation. For a time she was deprived of speech and motion; but she recovered, and labored to her feet. She stood before her husband and looked down at him in a maze of contending emotions. Her eyes traveled curiously over his still form, as if here were a person strange to her. She spoke finally.

"And you thought, Horace, to bring honor to our son in such a way as this?" She continued without waiting for a reply that could only be futile. "I pity you, Horace, for it is not only the body of you that is ill; it is your soul. Poor, poor boy!"

Her hand touched his hair; then she walked wearily to the door. Blake raised his head.

"Jane!" he cried brokenly. "I have suffered. I have lived in hell. Oh, believe me! And now that you know—what?"

"You must give me time to think," she told him with a peculiar softness. "For Joe's sake, for yours, for Betty's. I will stand by you, Horace—but you must give me time to think."

She left him. Horace Blake passed his hand over his face and dashed the clammy dew from it. He stared about him dumbly for a time, and presently stumbled out into the street.

When it was time to go home that evening Blake felt unable to meet his wife. He got his house on the phone, and was thankful it was a servant who answered.

"I shall be detained at the office till late. Tell Mrs. Blake," he said.

It was nearing midnight when finally he went home. The house was dead save for

a dimmed-light in the halls. He stole up to his room, furtive as a thief, found the electric button, pressed it—and stood stock still. The door to Jane's room, never before closed to him, now showed in full its paneled length. For a long time he stood looking at it, till at last, realizing what it symbolized to him, he turned, and just as he was, dressed and booted, cast himself prone on his bed.

IV

BEFORE the family came down the next morning Horace Blake had a cup of coffee served him and left the house. He instructed the servant to say that an early appointment at his office must excuse him from waiting for breakfast.

Jane saw him go. She had heard him stirring, and was at her window when he went out. She had passed an almost sleepless night, and was pale and worn; but in the long torturous hours she had decided on a course of action. She would slip away, later in the day, to Horace's office, where they could be strictly alone, and talk with him. There was but one thing for her husband to do, and on this she would firmly insist. At any sacrifice he must instantly insure Betty Sinclair against loss, must return into her hands the fund she had confided to his keeping. Rather the direst poverty for little Joe than a smirch on the name he bore!

At eleven o'clock Nat and Betty were about to sally forth on another old-haunt expedition. Jane was in her room, dressed for the street, waiting for them to leave the house.

As they went down to the car, a messenger came up with a telegram. It was for Nat. He read it, and shook his head at Joe, who was dancing with impatience to be gone.

"Sorry, kiddy," he said, "but we'll have to put off this joy-ride. Uncle Nat has to see a man. Sit tight, old fellow, and we'll have our fun some other day!"

"Suppose," suggested Betty, "we drive you up-town? We will wait or return for you, whichever you say."

"The first, thank you; but I can't say when I'll be through, so I'll get back as I can."

They gave Joe the back seat all to himself, and started off.

"Now, where?" inquired Betty.

"The Altamont Building, please."

"Oh! That is where your brother has his office," she exclaimed.

"Why, yes, so it is," returned Nat. "Guess I'll drop in on him while I'm there."

"I don't mind waiting at all," she hazarded again, and laughed. "You see, I've nothing but time on my hands, and I'd like to spend some of it."

"No," he said positively. "It is good of you, but I'd rather you wouldn't."

"Then I will wait for you at home," she announced as an end to the argument.

He contemplated her as she sat beside him at the wheel—a sweet, wholesome, altogether desirable girl.

"Do you know," he remarked soberly, "to a wanderer that has an alluring sound—home and waiting?"

After this they were silent until he was put down at the Altamont. She gave him then a brief, uncertain glance.

"I will be—waiting for you—at home," she said softly, and drove quickly away.

Nat went up direct to his brother's suite. In truth, Horace was the only man he had to see. In the outer office they told him Mr. Blake had given orders that he was not to be disturbed.

"It doesn't apply to me," said the big man calmly. "I'm his brother, and I have news for him."

He passed through several rooms to a door lettered "private." This he pushed open unceremoniously, and entered. Horace, with a spasmodic jerk, buried under a heap of papers on his desk something that he had been holding—something deadly cold and wicked, which escaped Nat's eye. He whirled in his chair toward the intruder, scattering a sheaf of telegrams with the action.

"Didn't I say—" he began, and broke off as he saw who it was. "What the devil has brought you here?" he snarled.

"I came to talk," said Nat coolly.

Blake let loose an oath.

"You are not wanted. Get out!"

Instead, Nat turned the key in the door, selected a chair, and drew it up to the opposite side of the desk. He sat down and looked intently at his brother.

"Have you thought, Horace," he said, "that I was deceived by that sham seizure of yours the other night? You were simply in a panic. You couldn't guess whether Arthur Abbott had told me anything about your operations in the Street. Well, he did

say that you were pretty heavily loaded up with Consolidated Rubber, and on a falling market. He seemed to think I ought to know."

Blake was smitten still. A protracted respiration was the only sound from him.

"You see, Corliss, Abbott & Lee are my brokers also," Nat proceeded. "And I'm in rubber, too—the short end."

"You!" gasped Horace.

Nat disregarded the exclamation.

"When Abbott told me that you had a boy—a boy named after our dear old dad—I was impelled to come out here and put you right on Consolidated. I'd forgotten a good many things in the past; or, if not forgotten, they didn't sting in my memory. I came, and you know the welcome you gave me."

Horace made no response. His tongue lay dry in his mouth.

"But I'm not here to indulge in bitter words," Nat continued. "I've an idea that you are in something of a fix, and it may help to talk it over. After all, you are my father's son, and that's a claim on me I can't ignore." He nodded as if in agreement with himself. "I had a wire just now from Abbott. Consolidated Common sold off ten points inside an hour this morning. Your reports have told you the same, of course, but—and here's what you don't know—I came to the States for the sole purpose of getting control of the stock for my syndicate."

"Your syndicate!" Horace managed to articulate. "Yours? Man, you said you were broke!"

"You said it. I simply did not deny it," Nat replied. "I've made a study of rubber. Three years in the East Indies, five in the Para district. Perhaps you will remember that I wrote to you from Para offering you a chance with me, and you—declined."

"My God!" muttered Horace.

"I got in," Nat pursued, "on a new rubber tract back on the Tapajos River—an amazing find. It took time to get the concession through, and rumors went abroad that were felt here in Consolidated. The stock dropped. Then I crossed over to take a hand. Yesterday, after the market closed, Abbott gave to the press the story of the new field. It was sooner than I anticipated, but he says conditions forced his hand. This morning Consolidated selling orders piled in, and the market was shot to

pieces. The stock will recover. It is basically sound—"

A hoarse outcry interrupted him.

"Nat Blake, you've ruined me—do you hear? You've ruined me, and Joe, and Jane, and Betty—"

"Stop!" Nat smashed his fist down on the desk to still the clamor. "Talk sense! Abbott gave me to understand you were carrying a heavy line with them, but so far had met your margin promptly—"

"Not only with them," burst in Blake, "but with Bailey & Hutchinson and Wood & Co. And now, this morning, come these cursed calls for more margins—always more, more—and I can't meet them. Look! I'm cleaned out at last—gone!"

He grabbed crazily among the telegrams heaped on the desk. It brought to view the menacing steel of a Smith & Wesson. Before he could repair this inadvertence Nat's hand had leaped forth and seized the weapon.

"So," he said in cold contempt, "this was to be the avenue of your escape!"

"There was no other way," Horace whimpered. "I'm insured. It would help Jane."

Nat pocketed the pistol. He looked his brother's shrinking figure over with an inexorable eye.

"And Miss Sinclair?" he questioned. "You have had the handling of her money. Have you—"

Horace's face went a muddy purple. His hands, interlocked, writhed in their own embrace. He did not speak, but Nat had his answer.

"What is the amount of her loss?" he demanded relentlessly.

"Thirty-five thousand. But Jane would do what she could—"

"Was it all she had?"

"Yes."

Blake's voice was an expiring whisper. For seconds the hush of the dead filled the room. The older man withered under the blue flames centered on him from across the desk, and shriveled down in his chair with his head sunk between his humped shoulders until he was but a miserable parody of his former self.

"It was for Joe," he mumbled. "I wanted it for Joe!"

Nat made a gesture of supreme impatience. The other's moral attitude was beyond comprehension.

"Does Jane know?" he asked.

"I told her yesterday," Horace Blake quavered.

"All?"

"All."

As if the mention of her name had conjured her physically before them, Jane's voice came to them from the door, and the sound of her hand trying the knob.

"Horace! Horace! I wish to see you. It is important!"

"Ah!" Nat breathed deeply, and on the instant framed his course. He rose, towering high above his brother, and said in a clear, swift whisper: "Don't let her see you like this. I'm going to put you on your feet again, for the sake of—oh, all of us. Buck up, man!"

He crossed to the door and opened it. He smiled encouragingly into the suffering eyes of the woman as she paused at sight of him.

"Nat! You—here!"

Her lips trembled with the start his presence brought her.

"Where else should I be in Horry's time of trouble?" he answered. "Come in, Jane. It is well that you are here. We will fix this thing up among the three of us. No other shall know."

A tremulous sigh escaped her. In it were blended a great relief and a greater wonderment. Nat, the waster, was to save them! She came slowly in, her eyes fleeing to her husband, who had pulled himself up in his chair. In his breast flickered the faint spark of a rekindled hope. He tried for words, but failed. He sat abashed, humbled, before these two.

"Have this chair, sister Jane," invited Nat cheerily. He placed it at a little remove from the desk, and so that her face should be sheltered from the merciless glare of the window. "Horace and I," he rattled on, to cover the moment's awkwardness, "have been talking over the situation. You see, I happened by chance to learn that he was in rather deep water, and—oh, he will give you the details later. The main thing is that I am fortunately in a position to help him, and I'm right pleased to do it." He consulted his watch. "We have got to act promptly, so if you will excuse us we'll get busy."

He resumed his place at the desk opposite Blake, and drew a pad of paper to him. He addressed a wire to Arthur Abbott.

Meet all margins on Horace Blake's holdings of Consolidated Rubber with Bailey & Hutchinson,

Wood & Co., and your own house. Charge my account. See you to-morrow.

Nat shoved the despatch across the desk to Horace.

"Have I the names right? Yes? Well, phone it in to the Western Union. Make sure they don't confuse my name with yours."

"Nat!" cried Horace Blake in a shaking voice. "I don't deserve—I'm not worthy—"

"You'd better phone, Horry," put in Nat quietly. "We have only three hours before the close. Tell them to rush it, and repeat it back."

And so Blake, with his wife listening tensely, sped the message that spelled his financial salvation. Nat meanwhile was busy with pen and ink. He was not through when his brother finished telephoning, and there was silence save for the scratching of the pen.

Horace let his eyes dwell fixedly on Jane, and there was that in them which told her he was a chastened man. She smiled at him through sudden tears.

"I guess this will do," pronounced Nat, leaning back from the desk with the written paper in his hand. "It is a conveyance, Horace, of your rubber holdings to Jane; not just in legal form, perhaps, but it will answer as between you and me. There will be a little money in it for Jane and Betty when she closes out the stock." Insensibly his voice took on a hard note. "You have no objection to signing, I presume?"

Blake reached for the paper. A certain fervid eagerness marked the action.

"I am glad—glad—to do it, Nat, if it will only a little prove to you that I've

learned my lesson, and—Nat, I am overwhelmed by your generous kindness—"

He could not proceed. Nat got up.

"It's all right, Horry. Perhaps we have each come into a better knowledge of the other." He glanced at Jane. "There are times in every man's life that he doesn't care to recall—God knows I'm aware of that in person. The thing is to profit by them." He allowed himself to break into a jaunty laugh. "I guess we've had enough sermonizing for one day, and I'm going. My train leaves at three. I've a somewhat particular matter to engage me until then."

"Ah, but you are coming back to us?" Jane had left her chair. Her hands were pressed to her heart, her eyes swimming with feeling. "You are coming back to us?" she repeated, deserted by all other speech but this, yet somehow expressing with it her soul's great gratitude.

"I should say I was!" cried Nat, fending off his own emotion with a show of boisterous heartiness. "We are just getting acquainted, sister Jane, all of us; and there's that little scamp Joe. Coming back? Well, rather!"

Jane's arms lifted, opened, and closed around him. Her face was hidden on his broad breast. Horace, pale and moved, came and stood wordlessly by. For a moment they remained thus, then Nat gently put Jane into her husband's arms, and without a backward glance went away.

There was a new light in his eyes as he issued on the street. A taxi was passing, and he hailed it.

"Do your prettiest, old-timer," he said to the driver as he jumped in. "Somebody is waiting for me at home!"

TROUBADOUR'S SONG

I SHALL praise Love still;
I shall never say—
Having had my will,
With my hair turned gray—
Yea,
One word unkind
Of the god that's blind.

When the pulse beats slow
And I wend my way
Down the afterglow
Of the dying day—
Yea,
Having had my will,
I shall praise Love still!

Harry Kemp

Black Truth

THE TRAGEDY OF A PSYCHIC REVELATION THAT WAS BOTH
TRUE AND FALSE

By Genevieve Wimsatt

OLD Mrs. Cullen paused at the gate of the cemetery to sniff the incense of the pines on the vesper air, and to shift a damp newspaper bundle from her right arm to her left.

"Where's Mrs. Morrison's?" inquired her companion, turning her head from side to side until her harsh crape veil crackled like last year's leaves in the wind.

"Hers is farther on," answered the bent little woman in brown alpaca, leading the way through the wrought-iron gates and down a path that diverged sharply from the main road.

The crunching of the gravel under their sedate tread was the only sound in the cemetery as the two women followed the bypath over the rise of the hill, and around the hemlock copse. Rounding the turn, Mrs. Cullen pointed to an enclosure at the end of the lane, where a tall white monument stood alone in the center of a little aspe of pine-trees, like a paschal candle in a dim sanctuary.

"There it is," she announced, hurrying forward. "It's a long time you've been away from these parts, Mrs. Maguire, so of course you haven't seen it before; but this is the tenth year I've come to plant ivy on her grave. It doesn't grow very well here; the summer kills it."

"What's that?" gasped the rusty crape widow suddenly, clutching the brown alpaca arm. "It looks like a black wick on a snuffed candle!"

But Mrs. Cullen had stooped in the path, and was groping for a pebble.

"Begone, ye bird of black deceit!" she screamed. "Leave her be! Leave her be, I say!"

The missile clattered against the grave-stone. The jetty bird perched on the apex of the shaft flapped his wings, rose with a

hoarse *caw, caw* of derision, and took a deliberate flight into the sunset.

"'Twas only a crow, after all," breathed Mrs. Maguire, recovering herself. "Why did you throw the stone at it, Mrs. Cullen? You might have chipped that fine monument."

"Maybe, maybe," replied the other woman without conviction. "Maybe it was a crow, and maybe it was the spirit of the black truth that brought her here!"

"Black truth!" scoffed the widow. "And sure you must know that all truth is white as snow, Mrs. Cullen."

"That it is not, Mrs. Maguire! There's the truth of God that's white, and that brings comfort and healing; but there's another kind, too, as she that lies under that stone learned to her sorrow, poor lady. Twenty years and more I kept her house, and loved her like a sister, and who should know better than I that there's more than one sort of truth?"

Without waiting for a reply, Mrs. Cullen laid her damp bundle on the base of the monument, and lifted half a dozen ivy slips from the moist newspapers. Silently she sought for the scanty spots in the blanket of green over the mound, and with a small trowel that she drew from her hand-bag, planted the rooted sprays on the grave. When she had finished her task, she arose stiffly, returned the trowel to her bag, and sank upon the iron cemetery bench, where Mrs. Maguire hastened to make room for her.

"Now, about the different kinds of truth you were speaking of," began the widow invitingly. "I've lived sixty-eight years, but I never heard tell of but one sort of truth, and that's the Lord's truth. How came it that Mrs. Morrison, a lady born and bred, knew of any other?"

"Oh, it's all the world may hear now!" cried the old woman in creaking alpaca, her voice rising to a wail wherein grief mingled with the triumph of exoneration. "It's all the world may hear how she was done to death by the dark truth—if you can call it so that was truth to the ears, but lies to the heart—truth to the fact, but lies to the spirit!"

Her dimmed gray eyes brightened with a sudden wistful hope.

"Perhaps she'll hear, too, down in her grave," she ventured as an afterthought. "Perhaps she'll hear, too, and be at peace!"

"Then tell us," whispered the widow, awed but avid, leaning closer with a rustle of crape.

II

"It was after I'd been housekeeper to her for years, and the doctors had told her she couldn't hold out much longer against the disease. She'd guessed that long before they told her, so she wasn't frightened; but the thought of the children preyed on her. Three she had then—Mr. Frank, a quiet, indoor chap of sixteen; Miss Margery, a harum-scarum tomboy of about thirteen; and little Thornton, that we all called Thor. I loved them like my own children. Good youngsters they were, too—full of life and mischief, but never mean, or lying, or sly.

"They had their little notions, too, as children always do. Mr. Frank was beginning to say he didn't want to be a lawyer, like his father had been. Miss Margery was always coaxing her mother to let her learn bareback riding, so she could go with the circus; and little Thor had a way of stealing away from home for hours that almost drove his mother wild. And Mrs. Morrison fretted—a widow, you know, and she felt that the children were a trust from her dead husband, and that she was responsible for their turning out well.

"If I only knew what's before them, I could die in peace," she would tell me.

"Poor lady, she died, but not in peace. I knew what was working in her mind, for I'd seen the books around the house—'Glimpses into the Future,' 'Communication with the Spirit World,' 'Séances with Famous Mediums,' and the like; but it wasn't until she came to me one day, and told me what she was going to do, that I knew the thing had such a hold on her. I

tried to discourage her, but when I found she was bound to go, with me or without me, I said no more, but put on my bonnet.

"I'd never been near one of these psychics before, and though I believed that all of them were fakers, I was interested. While we were waiting in the dingy parlor, Mrs. Morrison told me that this woman we were going to see had the reputation of never having told a lie and never having been caught in a mistake. I learned afterward that she was much run after by fashionable women—widows, mostly, with some money.

"Well, Heaven help the clairvoyants if they all live like bats in dusty, dark corners, as this one did! She was a fat, tall, lowy woman, like a great chestnut grub, with a yellow wig; and she had a deep bass voice like a man's. She didn't want me to stay for the reading, as she called it; but I just wouldn't leave, and Mrs. Morrison slipped an extra bill into her hand, so finally she decided that she could coax her control to put up with me.

"I won't tell you about how she groaned, and got stiff, and rolled her eyes, and talked in a thin, squeaky little voice, like a four-year-old child reciting a piece. Any faker could do those tricks; but it was what she said that made my blood curdle, for every word that bloated sleep-talker spoke had the ring of truth in it, as clear as the clink of gold ringing on stone. I didn't want to believe her, but I did, I did, for I know the truth when I hear it, even though it comes from a creature like that. I began to be frightened then, and tried to get Mrs. Morrison away, but I might as well have tried to whisk a comet out of its course.

"I see three persons who are very close to the sitter," the woman piped in that foolish voice. "A boy—is his name Frederick? No, something that begins with an F. Yes, Frank! And a girl, with pretty hands and feet, and wide eyes. Margaret? Marguerite? No, no, her name is Margery! And another little girl—no, it's a boy! He is so pretty and graceful I thought at first he was a girl. Th—Thurston? No, not Thurston, but something like that."

"Though she tried for a long time, she couldn't get his name, and had to give it up in the end and call him brown-eyed boy.

"Look ahead ten years, and tell me what has happened to them!" Mrs. Morrison implored the creature. "Frank—what of my boy Frank?"

"The woman groaned again, and her eyes rolled up until they seemed to stick fast, with the pupils half-way under the puffy lids, for all the world like a doll when the weight that holds its glass eyes open is broken.

"I see a dimly lighted alley under an arch. It is night—a wet, foggy night. A cart—no, a covered wagon draws up at the curb. There is no sound, for the horses' hoofs are wrapped in sacks. A man leaps from the driver's seat, and looks up and down the street. He is young, with curly hair, and, I think, hazel eyes, but I can't be sure in this bad light. He beckons to another man on the driver's seat, and together they go around to the back of the wagon. They lift out a long, heavy bundle wrapped in sheets, and carry it toward the arch. As they pass under the lamp, something slips down from the end of the wrappings and dangles in the light. It is a thick braid of auburn hair. The two men whisper together; they seem nervous and fearful of discovery. They carry the heavy burden into the alley, and now—I can see them no longer."

Mrs. Maguire sat up stiffly on the iron bench.

"It was a lie!" she declared hotly. "And did his own mother believe the creature that slandered her eldest son?"

"Sh-sh-sh!" crooned Mrs. Cullen. "Twas the truth the creature was telling, and well we both knew it as we listened, though Mrs. Morrison seemed to shrivel up before my eyes, like an apple in the frost. Then the fat medium looked again, and it was Miss Margery she saw this time.

"There's a canvas-topped wagon standing beside a spring," she said. "The horses have been unhitched, and are tethered near by. A man in a blue shirt, with a red handkerchief around his neck, is blowing on a bed of coals. A woman comes from the wagon and watches him. She is the girl with pretty hands and feet that I saw before. She is dressed like a man, in heavy boots and tan shirt and breeches. The man is heating a soldering-iron in the fire, and is going to mend a pan."

"Miss Margery a vagabond, following the road with a tinker!" snorted the listener indignantly. "Lies, all lies!"

"Would that it had been—a lie as false clear through, and alike on both sides, and we would have known the lie when we heard it, she, the mother, and I, that was

born by the lakes of Killarney! I tried to get my lady away then, but she was set on knowing what would become of little Thor. He was her youngest, you know, born after his father's death. He was the very core of her heart.

"The medium groaned, and rolled her eyes until nothing but the bloodshot whites showed.

"I can't see him," she mumbled. "I can't see the brown-eyed boy. He isn't here!"

"Mrs. Morrison pleaded with her like a condemned man with his judge.

"Try!" she begged. "You must, you must tell me where he is, my little Thor!"

"Thor, little Thor," the medium repeated after her. "That makes it clearer, but I can't see him yet. He's hidden from my control. There's something dark, and damp, and brown between. Yes, I see it now! There's a field—deep mud, frozen in ruts, and dried weeds covered in a rime of ice. When the wind shakes them, they clatter like chains. There's a wall to the west—a gray stone wall, with narrow windows high up; and now I can see some low mounds, ten—perhaps a dozen of them. I didn't notice them at first—for they are almost hidden in the weeds. The rickety wooden head-stones are falling down. One is standing, but the letters on it have almost all been washed off by the rains."

"The Potter's Field!" screamed Mrs. Morrison. "My Thor, my little Thor, buried without a name in the shadow of the jail!"

"Then she fainted dead away. I had to call a cab and have her taken home, with the medium crying and wringing her hands and swearing, in a deep voice like a man's, that she didn't know anything that had been said.

"Well, Mrs. Morrison didn't live a year longer, and she never was quite right in her mind after that. She wouldn't talk much, but sometimes in her sleep I'd hear her mutter:

"A woman-killer, and a vagabond, and a grave in the prison yard! Thor, my little Thor!"

III

"BUT it was all lies!" denounced the listener impatiently. "Why, you know it was all lies. Nellie Cullen! Mr. Frank is a great surgeon, and there never was a girl that wasn't as safe with him as she'd be at

the altar of God. Why, he treats them all like saints in glory! And many's the poor youngster that he's cured of meningitis since he made that discovery when he was a young medical student, through performing the post-mortem on the girl who died in the epidemic! Make *him* out a murderer, indeed? Him that saved my own nephew when all the other doctors had given him up?"

"'Twas the black truth she told, and the blackest dregs of it!" replied Mrs. Cullen. "'Twas true he brought the young girl's body away by night, wrapped in sheets, because the town authorities wouldn't let him make his experiment, for fear of the contagion. But the white truth was that the girl's relatives had faith in him, and knew he was working against the plague that had killed their daughter, and they let him take the body to Dr. Carson's Sanitarium, despite the authorities. Her brother went with him and helped him carry the body in the back way, under an arch and up the alley. And what he learned then he used to check the epidemic when it broke out again the next year, and saved the lives of many children."

"But Miss Margery's no jade! That was a lie, anyhow! She's married to a lawyer, and has two babies. It was a lie about her!"

"The fashionables didn't go caravanning in Mrs. Morrison's day," sighed Mrs. Cullen. "They didn't dress in khaki and flannel shirts, and follow the road from New York to St. Augustine, just for a lark; and ladies didn't wear hiking-togs, and their husbands didn't solder leaky pots."

"But the boy Thor—a lad to make any mother bless the day he was born! Sure,

his name's on a bronze tablet in the town hall, and all the mothers tell their little ones about his bravery. He's dead in France on the field of glory, and they haven't found the place yet."

"Yes, they've found him at last—but the field of glory and the Potter's Field looked just alike to the black truth. In Mrs. Morrison's time there was no war, and only tramps and convicts were buried like that. I saw old Colonel Morrison's report of the finding of the grave—the gray stone wall of an old monastery, with narrow windows high up; and a raw, windy field, with twelve low mounds overgrown with weeds. An old peasant had buried the gallant lads by night, after they had all been killed holding the enemy back from the village while the poor people fled from their homes."

With a sigh the old woman arose and shook out her whining alpaca skirts.

"There's the white truth, and there's the black truth," she sighed, looking down at the ivy. "There's white truth, and the other kind; and the truth that trickles tainted from the dark, and oozes through the lips of a fat, greasy psychic, is venom in the blood and madness in the brain. And may she that the black truth has stretched here while her children live in honor, or rest in glory, hear my voice, and be at peace! It is growing cold, Mrs. Maguire—let us go."

The dew-wet gravel crunched under hastening feet. At the bend in the path the rusty crape veil scraped across a lank shoulder, and Mrs. Maguire spoke.

"Look, Mrs. Cullen, there's that crow back again, perched on the top of the tombstone, like a snuffed wick on a candle!"

THE STAGE-COACH DAYS

THE stage-coach days of long ago,
Of prancing steed and stately phrase,
Have vanished in time's ebb and flow—
The stage-coach days.

We live aloof from ancient ways
Of tally-ho and progress slow,
Of love-lorn minstrels and their lays.

Yet olden times can never go
Quite to oblivion while the rays
Of history gild with afterglow
The stage-coach days!

William Hamilton Hayne

The Jewels of Nobleman Jack

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE—A ROMANCE OF LOVE AND
ADVENTURE IN TROPICAL SEAS

By Julian Hawthorne

OUT of that pure good nature which is sometimes an element in the character of persons otherwise admirable, Matthew Madison, Jr., had informed his vis-à-vis in the dining-car of the New York-Florida train that he was the son of a manufacturer of well-borers, that he was himself a sort of naturalist and archeologist, and that he was now on his way to Central America on a commission from the Smithsonian. His vis-à-vis had seemed impressed, and had for his part handed to Matthew a large, decorative card, bearing the name of Phineas Boskom, and in the lower left-hand corner:

Advance Agent Anderson's Arabian Circus and Menagerie Company.

"And your most humble and obliged servant, Mr. Madison," Mr. Boskom had added, out of his own mouth and bounty.

Matthew smiled politely, and inwardly consigned Mr. Boskom and his menagerie to the devil. What had possessed the head waiter to put him at that table?

"And are the Smith Sons animal-dealers, might I ask?" Boskom pursued.

For a moment Matthew failed to understand. Then he said:

"Of a sort."

"I was always partial to animals, myself," said Boskom. He pronounced it "hanimals," and betrayed other signs of a British origin. "But, as I might say, hun-professionally. I was born and nurtured to 'igher things, sir. My father was of the nobility; but his estates—no matter. After many vicissitudes I landed in a menagerie! Me, born to the purple, brought low to 'unt wild beasts in 'Onduras. 'Sic traskit,' as we said at Hoxford. A mad world, sir!"

Mr. Boskom looked more like a retired butler of convivial sympathies than a scion

of the nobility. He was short and stout, with a manner at once pompous and cringing. He wore a decorative waistcoat.

The waiter had just brought the coffee. Matthew was on the point of ignoring it and returning to his car, when two persons entered and took a table on the opposite side of the aisle. Both were women—one gray-haired and stately, the other young and—

"By George!" said Matthew to himself.

She had taken the seat diagonally facing Matthew, and her aspect separated him from his ordinary sober senses. She was simply the loveliest, sweetest, most graceful, and most radiant being ever yet born into this unworthy world. She was the girl that Matthew had dreamed of and adored since his infancy—the girl whom it had been ordained, since the stars were young, that he should love and marry. She had violet eyes and red-gold hair, and her name was Mayda, most adorable of all girls' names.

"Mayda dear, your bow is a little on one side," her mother had said, before looking over the menu-card.

What her other name might be didn't matter, because Matthew knew that it would soon be Madison. Mayda Madison—he repeated it to himself. Was ever combination more perfect?

"By George!" was Matthew's only means, at the moment, of expressing these views and emotions. It was his capsule expletive, reserved for high moments.

Meanwhile Boskom had been talking, and was now ending with an interrogative inflection. What had he been saying? Ask an eagle what ground-hogs talk of in their burrows! Matthew stared at him dazedly. The man held a long, black cigar in his hand.

"And if you would honor me by acceptin' of one of these, sir—it's the right brand, believe me—we'll retire to the smoker and be cozy an' comfortable!"

It was like being invited away from the threshold of the Garden of Eden by a toad.

"Thank you, I—I'm going to have another pot of coffee. I won't detain you. Good day!"

"As you please, Mr. Madison, sir!" said Boskom.

He rose and took himself off. He was probably offended, but Matthew didn't care. Should the incomparable one stay long enough, Matthew was prepared to drink all the coffee on the train, though it didn't agree with him as a general thing.

Her eyes had passed over him once; but can angels have cognizance of mortal flesh and blood? Her hand—oh, the white wonder of it—was playing with the salt-cellar. Blessed salt to be so caressed! Oh, the curves and dimples of it, the flexible eloquence of those fingers, touching and withdrawing! It was her left hand, and on the third finger was a superb sapphire ring.

What, by the way, did such a ring, in such a position, portend? Could it be a betrothal-ring? Could his Mayda, whom he had followed through uncounted eons and measureless spaces, be already engaged? If so, then Matthew realized that he was destined to become the murderer of her fiancé.

Meanwhile she and her mother were eating ox-tail soup. Nothing to compare with that profile, as she lifted her perfect chin to meet the soup-spoon at rhythmic intervals, had ever been imagined since the artists of ancient Greece carved medallions on jewels. And that wrist, that forearm, the nape of that neck, with the tiny golden curls on it—and that ear! A man might spend a happy lifetime in no other occupation than that of following the matchless curves of Mayda's ear!

She touched the crushed rose of her mouth with her napkin; then the napkin slipped to the floor. Matthew, in his spring to restore it to her, almost wrenched his table from its metal moorings in the floor of the car. She acknowledged the courtesy with a surprised but courteous inclination of the head. He had been clumsy, but he was happy! In a way, the ice had been broken. On a long train-journey there were always opportunities.

Yes—but what about that sapphire ring?

Matthew was not one of those bony-jawed, button-brained, eagle-eyed young gentlemen who demonstrate collars and underwear in the manufacturers' advertisements. He was merely a nice-looking young chap, well-bred, and, as a rule, gentle. Yet he was now grinding his teeth. Assuredly murder would be done should what the sapphire suggested be true. She must have been forced into the revolting contract, and doubtless she would welcome deliverance. The back of her mother, now that he examined it, indicated a worldly and soulless personage, of the type that always sacrifices an innocent young life to Mammon—to some worn-out debauchee who possessed wealth and social position.

"It shall not be!" Matthew vowed between his grinding teeth.

The waiter wished to know if there was any mo' oddahs.

"Bring me some coffee," said Matthew absently.

The waiter hefted the still full pot.

"Coffee done got cold, sa'. Bring yo' fresh pot, sa'?"

Matthew felt exposed and humiliated.

"No—I mean the check!"

He paid it and rose. Would she look at him? Unfortunately she was just then helping her mother to a breaded cutlet. He had to retire, baffled for the moment, but resolved.

Seated in his own compartment—for privacy, he had secured both lower and upper berths—he took up the illustrated weekly paper that lay on the seat, and opened it upon a story entitled "Love at First Sight." He let the paper fall, and sank into gloomy reverie. Hitherto he had imagined that love at first sight was an illusion; now he knew that, save at first sight, no true love was possible.

Oh, yes, he, like other men, had had his trial trips, his fancies, but never anything like this! He had wasted eight and twenty years of life; and now, when at last he had begun to live, he must come a cropper over a sapphire ring! Ah, must he? He would see about that!

Boskom came waddling down the aisle, and wheeled himself into the seat opposite Matthew, in spite of the latter's hastily interposed screen of "Love at First Sight."

"It just now come to me, Mr. Madison, sir," he said, "that you and me bein' both hinterested in hanimals, and headin' south, we might 'itch teams, as the sayin' is, and

—but what might be your destination, if it's a fair question?"

"I am going nowhere in particular that I know of, Mr. Boskom," replied Matthew grimly, all his good nature stripped off him. "Mexico City, or Caracas, or Lima—something like that. Will you excuse me? I'm very busy."

Again he hid himself behind "Love at First Sight." Boskom had a monocle, and he now inserted it in his right eye-socket.

"Quite an itinnery!" he said. "Reminds one of the scenic railway at Coney! Mebbe you'll be stoppin' off at Seattle or 'Onoluly on your way? There, there, no offense, sir—I must 'ave my little joke! Hidle cur'osity was never a foible of mine, sir. We all vallies our privacy at times; I understand puffyckly!"

Matthew, holding his eyes strictly to the title of the story, saw himself in vision taking Boskom by the neck and throwing him off the car; but he made no rejoinder.

Boskom couldn't let well alone.

"Brace of nice-lookin' females, they was, in the diner, just as I was comin' out," he remarked pleasantly. "Did you 'appen to notice 'em? The caste of *Vere de Vere*, as the poet says. Oh, I know the real thing soon as I put my heye on it!"

"Do you occupy a berth in this car?" demanded Matthew, politely but firmly, laying down his paper and fixing his eyes upon the other.

"Me? No, sir; second to rear, lower six, is my station."

"I bought this section, upper and lower, so as to be undisturbed during the journey," Matthew continued. "I sometimes like to put my feet where you are sitting. I feel that way now. Will you kindly go to your place, or get out of mine, and leave me in peace? I assure you the matter is very urgent!"

The stern-visaged demonstrator of underwear might have recognized a kindred spirit in Matthew's aspect at this juncture. Boskom recognized something. It prompted him to get to his feet and perform an obeisance, the ironic dignity of which was somewhat marred by the swinging movement of the train, at that moment rounding a curve.

"I bid you good evening, Mr. Madison, sir," he said. "Courtesy and consideration for a fellow traveler is the mark of a gentleman, and always a specialty of mine. I hope I may find an opportunity to repay

the obligation I owe you, which weighs upon me very heavy. *Good evening!*" And he wheeled himself away.

Matthew, to be as good as his word, put his feet on the newly vacated place, after folding his arms tightly. No doubt that was better than to have put them, violently, on that of which the place had just been freed. He chuckled grimly. It was very seldom that he permitted himself to get angry. It was very seldom—never, till now—that he had been in love. How perverse that emotions so alien should thus pile one upon the other! The poor charlatan had meant no harm; low natures must needs act according to their nature. Matthew was disgusted with himself almost as much as he had been with Boskom. He would apologize the next time he encountered the creature.

Meanwhile he would think no more about it. Let him think of Mayda. What other thought, indeed, could occupy the mind in which she had established herself? They were both on the same train, that was certain; and what more probable than that both were booked for Key West?

Then it was possible that she would take the boat to Jamaica; but it was more likely that she might be going to Havana, for that was the more usual trip. In the latter case, he could modify his route by making Havana a stopping-place on the way to Jamaica, crossing the island to Santiago de Cuba, and so on. For that matter, what was Jamaica, and all the rest of the globe to boot, in comparison with the importance of following Mayda whithersoever her hallowed footsteps might take her?

Here, however, a fresh contingency crept into his brain. It was winter, the season when doddering valetudinarians of great wealth are prone to seek the tropics. Suppose Mayda's unspeakable fiancé had preceded her and her mother to Havana, or wherever else! There he would be, waiting to take her in his loathsome arms as she alighted at the wharf or station. How about that?

Sudden death—there could be no other answer! But Matthew felt that the prospect would be better if he could secure a formal introduction to Mayda before committing the justifiable homicide. Otherwise she might, in the natural agitation of such a moment, fail to catch his idea. For it would be necessary for them to fly at once to the uttermost part of the earth—Algiers,

he thought, would be a suitable retreat, or perhaps one of the Marquesas Islands.

An introduction—what more simple, and what more difficult? How could it be contrived? Time pressed; it must be done at breakfast to-morrow morning. He had the night before him in which to consider the means. Ah, love would find a way!

Why not knock against a waiter, causing him to upset a dish of fried eggs over her skirt—not Mayda's, but her mother's—and then ask their pardon for his clumsiness, and present his card? It was crude, but it would serve. Ten to one it would then be discovered that they had friends in common. Why hadn't he thought of so obvious a device at dinner-time?

He raised his head, and beheld Mayda's mother advancing along the aisle, with her daughter behind her. They were almost upon him. He unfolded his arms, snatched his feet from the seat opposite, and sprang erect. The weekly illustrated paper slid to the floor, with "Love at First Sight" uppermost. Mayda's mother stepped upon it; but Mayda paused, stooped, picked it up, and handed it to him with a courteous smile—while he stood stiff stricken, powerless to move or speak; and before he could fetch his breath, they were gone!

Had she seen the title of the story, and had that been the cause of her smile? It had been an amused smile, he thought; but his sudden up-jumping might have explained that. He had done the same thing at dinner, and she must think him a sort of jack-in-a-box. But she had certainly smiled, and that was better than frowning. And her picking up the paper meant something. Had she wished to ignore him, she would have stepped on it, like her mother.

Apparently her mother did wish to ignore him. All the better! There was a divergence of feeling on the subject between Mayda and her, and Mayda, consequently, must have taken his part. And inasmuch as she could not help being aware that he loved her—loved her at first sight—the outlook was promising. It paved the way for the fried eggs to-morrow.

He lay awake most of the night, watching the moon on her long journey across the sky and thinking of Mayda. The moon dazzled the stars out of sight, as did Mayda other girls. He fell asleep toward dawn, and when he awoke and looked at his watch, it was near ten o'clock. Would breakfast be over? He dressed furiously.

The train slowed up and stopped. He put his head out between his curtains.

"Porter, what station is this?"

"This is Jacksonville, sir."

"Is the dining-car open still?"

But the porter had gone on. By the time Matthew had found and put on his necktie, the train was moving on, too. He hurried to the dining-car. They were just about closing up, but he could still get a cup of coffee and rolls, and the fried eggs. Unfortunately, there was nothing now left to do with the eggs except to eat them. Mayda and her mother must have breakfasted long since, and returned to their car.

Matthew felt the greatest contempt for himself. Still, his scheme would work as well at luncheon.

In order to avoid further mishap, he obeyed the first luncheon call; but instead of going into the dining-room, he established himself in the passage outside, where he submitted amiably to being shoved this way and that, and to having his toes trodden on by incoming and outgoing guests, for the sake of seeing Mayda when she entered and securing a place near her. He saw Boskom—who, however, appeared not to see him—but there was no Mayda.

After an hour and a half of fruitless vigil, he finally went in with the last detachment, telling himself that she must have had her lunch brought to her in her own car. He projected a trip of investigation through the train after finishing his dreary meal.

However, he would have a smoke first. The smoking-compartment was full. As he hesitated at the portière, he heard Boskom's voice relating the feats of a trained chimpanzee belonging to the Arabian Menagerie. Boskom was sitting with his back toward him, puffing at one of his superior cigars. Then a man nearer to him remarked to another:

"That was a good-looker that got off at Jacksonville this morning, with the elderly party!"

"You mean the yellow-haired girl with dark blue eyes? She was a peach! And did you see the old dude waiting on the platform kiss her? I'd like to have been in on it! It was her father, I suppose."

"No, he was being too civil to the old lady to be that. Those old fellows get a good deal of the fun, after all!"

"You've said it!"

Matthew drew back. No doubt he was white to the lips, had there been any one

there to remark him. He staggered blindly through the next car, and dropped into his seat in the third one. This is what comes of oversleeping! Mayda had been kidnaped away from him.

The conductor came along. Matthew stopped him.

"I've changed my plans, and want to go back to Jacksonville. Can you fix it?"

"Jacksonville? Well, next stop is Palm Beach. You can get a train back from there to-morrow morning."

"If you'd let me off, I'd pay for a special engine—anything!"

"Sorry, sir, but I've no jurisdiction. No, I'm afraid Palm Beach 'll be the best you can do. It's a slow train up from there; but you might make Jacksonville to-morrow evening."

The conductor went on, leaving speechless despair behind him: but conductors are perhaps inured to that sort of thing.

To-morrow evening! Of course she wouldn't stop at Jacksonville; nobody stopped there. That senile kidnaper would be hurrying her off down the St. Johns River by boat, or by auto to Cedar Keys, or Tampa—anywhere. Useless to go to Jacksonville at this stage of the game!

The first round of the battle had gone against Matthew; but the battle wasn't over. The world was wide, but beauty like Mayda's couldn't be hidden long. He would find her yet!

For hours he sat pondering darkly. Palm Beach came and went, but he didn't stir. Finally, at the last call for dinner, he rose, and forced himself to eat. By a freak of fate, the majordomo gave him the very chair which Mayda had occupied. Perhaps that was of good augury. He had made up his mind that he might as well discharge his errand at Jamaica, get that off his "itinnery," as Boskom called it, and then direct his further course according to circumstances.

He had come out to hunt rare plants and insects in tropic jungles. He would now concentrate himself on the pursuit of one matchless flower, and sooner or later he would find it—he was sure of that!

II

On the boat at Key West, Matthew again ran across Boskom.

"Mr. Boskom," he said, confronting him, "I wish to ask your pardon for my rudeness on the train. I'd been—some-

thing had greatly disturbed me, just then, and I wasn't myself. I hope you'll be good enough to forget it."

Boskom scrutinized Matthew narrowly through his small black eyes, and put out a pudgy hand.

"Don't mention it, Mr. Madison, sir! I forgot it immediately. Have one of these weeds—you'll find 'em right, I believe. We all have our little moods and tempers. Why, I have 'em myself occasionally. Queer old place, Kingston. Ever see it? Stopping there long? Fine drives round the island—great scenery! Queer old folks there, too, but not much ginger left in 'em. Sugar and ginger went out together, eh? Ha, ha! I must 'ave my little joke! By the way, the captain tells me he's got a private jug of real old Jamaica in the chest. I was on my way to sample it. Have a nip?"

Matthew begged to be excused, and Boskom dived below. So that was off his conscience, and they would be in Kingston next morning. His father had given him a letter to his old friend Devereux Seaton, descendant of a gallant line of planters, but with little left of their once great possessions except their pride of race and portentous manners. He would be bored to extinction, no doubt, but he must put up with it for three or four days. There was probably a family, too, of anemic daughters and pithless sons, but it was all in the day's work. After that, he would be at liberty to pursue his quest. He had a notion that Havana would be a good place to start from.

He saw no more of Boskom that night, and felt grateful to the jug of old Jamaica. He was up early in the morning, and saw the romantic loom of the island in the soft tropic sunshine, rising mountainous out of the serene azure.

As the vessel rounded into the harbor, he looked over the rail and beheld a huge white shape moving silently beneath the transparent surface, on the watch for garbage, or for any passenger who might be tempted to take a morning dip. Then the grimy wharf, with its rows of negro women waiting to bring coal and carry out freight; and lastly a tall gentleman in a suit of snow-white linen, with a flowing blue silk tie and a Panama hat, standing up in a sort of gig with a handsome mare attached to it, and gazing up with a hospitable smile at the faces along the steamer rail.

Boskom, who had appeared during the last few minutes, looking somewhat bleared and dry-lipped, and had expressed interest in the white shark as a possible addition to the Arabian Menagerie, observed that the gent with the bushy white hair looked like the real goods. Mr. Boskom's bearing and speech were less punctilious and guarded than during the period previous to the jug.

"Who might be yonder toff in the gig, cap?" he inquired of the captain, who passed at the moment.

"You been 'ere before, and don't know the Hon. Devereux Seaton?" returned the mariner. "E's first mate to the gov'nor."

"Oh, ah, to be sure!" muttered Boskom, staring more intently. "What was that of 'im bein' robbed of half a million dollars?"

"'Im? His grandad, you mean. Wake up!" retorted the captain, rolling along aft, and shouting orders to the bosun to slack up a bit on the cable.

Boskom grunted and continued to stare. Without waiting to bid farewell to his traveling-companion, Matthew hastened to the companionway and stepped ashore.

He had often heard, at home, of his father's youthful friendship with the Hon. Devereux Seaton, but had never before set eyes on that gentleman. The first impression of him was agreeable. Manifesting a warm heart under a dignified exterior, he welcomed Matthew warmly with a grip of both his bony but still powerful hands, looking him over with a pair of keen blue eyes. His aquiline nose, lean cheeks, and sweeping gray mustache made him the ideal type of old-fashioned aristocracy.

"I can see a bit of your father in you, Matthew—if you'll pardon the familiarity of an old man who might say he knew you before you were born. But I fancy there'll be a good admixture of your mother, too—as should be the case in the offspring of a union as happy as theirs was. You're doubly welcome, sir! Now, how many boxes did you bring? We can bring up one in the gig, and I'll have the rest follow in the dray."

"Only one trunk and this suit-case, Mr. Seaton," replied the young man. "Nothing else, except this letter from father, and his best love and remembrances to you. I'm very glad to be the letter-carrier."

"I'll read it after we're home," said the other, patting the letter between the palms of his hands affectionately, and then putting it in his pocket. "The dear old chap!

This is truly a pleasure! You left him well and hearty?"

"Fit as possible, and wishing he could come with me."

"Good, good! Well, it's too bad that the family isn't here at this moment—off on a little visit, before the notification of your coming reached us; but they'll be back before long. You are to make a real stay with us, you know—six months or a year—the longer the better! It's been a long time between drinks, as your President—wasn't it?—said to somebody. So we'll keep bachelors' hall for a while, and—"

"My dear Mr. Seaton!" interposed Matthew, thinking of Mayda in the grasp of hoary villainy. "I'll have to be getting on in a few days, you know. I'm commissioned by the Smithsonian to—"

The old man laughed and waved the Smithsonian aside.

"They can wait. They are perennials, but we live only once. Here comes your box," he added, as a brawny negro girl trotted up with it on her shoulder. "Now we're off! When we get to the pen, I'll show you how we make mint juleps in this island. Your father used to say that Virginia never tasted better!"

Matthew climbed actively into the seat beside his host, who spoke to the mare, and she started at a powerful gait. As they turned off the wharf, a stout man stepped aside and lifted his hat ceremoniously as he caught Matthew's eye. It seemed impossible to be rid of Boskom; but Matthew soon forgot him in the beauty and tropical richness of the scenes through which they were passing, coming so soon after the snows and naked frigidity of New York.

He thought he could have spent a month here very pleasantly, had the circumstances been different, and if Mr. Seaton's family turned out to be so charming as Mr. Seaton himself; but that was not to be expected. He resolved to time his departure so as to avoid them, as soon as he should learn when they were expected to return. Pictures of Mayda, gagged and bound, were ever before his mental vision, and every hour that delayed his flying to her rescue passed grudgingly.

Meanwhile he was thankful that his host so far surpassed his anticipations: and the fervent heat of the morning sun rendered the promise of the mint julep interesting.

"This is Mona, Matthew," said Devereux Seaton, as they drove through a di-

lapidated gateway and along a broad sweep of drive with palms and giant ferns and bushes bearing crimson trumpet-flowers forming a lovely jungle on either side. "Only a hundred acres of it left now. We once owned a dozen places as good or better than this; but everything piled up on us at once, and beet sugar—they call it sugar, Heaven knows why—gave us the *coup de grâce*. At least, that was the last blow but one. Well, here we are!"

The mansion, or pen—in Jamaican patois both an estate and the dwelling upon it are referred to as "pen"—disclosed itself amid the billows of verdure that surged and arched and towered around and above it. It fronted north, a structure of massive stone overlaid with cream-colored plaster. Half a dozen wide and lofty windows opened on a marble veranda twenty feet broad, with a low marble rail bearing a mellow polish that showed it to have been leaned and sat upon by many Seaton generations. West of this veranda, and impinging upon it, was a square garden of two or three acres, filled with rose-bushes and orange-trees, both in bloom.

The eaves of the roof impended from a height of fifty feet, though the edifice was of two stories only. Jamaican architects planned their rooms for space and loftiness in the grand days when Mona was built. Extension chairs of bamboo and canvas opened their long arms in silent greeting, and two or three low tables uttered silent hospitality.

The two men ascended the steps of the great porch. At the threshold of the house entrance the old man turned with outstretched hands.

"Welcome once again to your father's son—and to yourself, too!" he said with emotion in his tones. "Stretch out your legs in this chair for a few minutes, my dear boy, while I see if your rooms are in order, and look over your father's letter, and get that julep started—we won't forget that!"

"This is really wonderful!" said Matthew to himself as he stretched at luxurious length on the cool canvas, which adapted itself to his figure. "There needs but one addition to make it heaven! Oh, to be here with Mayda!"

There was a soft jingling of crystal and silver within, and the old gentleman reappeared, preceding a sable, smiling nymph who bore a tray with tall goblets, from

which proceeded an aroma that voluptuously contended with those of the garden. From the brown-gold liquid which filled the glasses uprose a dark emerald growth of that mystic herb which must first have come to life upon the fragrant slopes of Parnassus. There followed a genial clink, as host and guest touched their beakers together; and presently two long sighs of content, as the youth and the veteran exchanged tranquil smiles across the table.

"It's the drink of immortality!" murmured the youth.

"Yes, it's one of the few good things that progress has left us," rejoined the other. "Woman is another—though I'm told that even women are getting to be not quite all that they were when I was young. But some of the perfect ones are still left, thank God!"

"Amen!" said Matthew devoutly.

"You're not a benedick yet, of course?"

"No; but—"

"I understand—the vision and the hope! What is it Tennyson says? There are other poets now, I believe, but I've never ventured beyond him:

"To love one maiden only, cleave to her
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her!"

"But I used to think that 'years' was a little too leisurely. 'Months' would be better, and 'weeks' were long enough! Are you in that stage?"

"Days—hours, if you leave it to me!" declared Matthew, with serious fervor.

"Bravo! Well, Matthew, I pledge her with all my heart," said he, lifting his glass again. "And when you're ready for your honeymoon, come and spend it here!"

Matthew could think of no words that would adequately express his feelings, so he stuck his nose in the mint and finished his draft in silence. His father's friend produced cigars of the Vuelta Abajo and drifted into conversation about matters less intimately personal—the old planters of the eighteenth century, the romantic annals of Jamaica—during which the forenoon passed away. Then came lunch, a two-hour interval for the siesta, and a canter of a dozen miles up zigzags of perfect roads made of pounded white limestone to a broad shelf commanding a transcendent view—was there ever such another view? Matthew's heart was torn between delight and exasperation—the delight of his senses,

and exasperation because Mayda was not beside him to share it.

Back to Mona, and to an evening of celestial hues and perfumes, moony splendors and darkling mysteries, with a thunderstorm, visible, but too distant to be audible, above those craggy pinnacles in the west. Dinner was announced, and Matthew entered a vast room decorated with portraits of Seaton's of the past, kings and queens of sugar, aristocrats wealthy beyond spending and careless of their wealth, who lavished more money in a week than their descendant could command in a twelvemonth, but who had left him a full inheritance of family pride, gentle breeding, and courtly manners. Matthew silently wished that he could find a pretext for presenting the sweet old patrician with a million or so for which he had no present use, and could see him revive the glories of the stately days of yore!

As dessert was brought on, there was a murmuring colloquy in the doorway, and in stalked a tall, erect figure in a scant calico frock, barefooted, and with grizzled, curly wool surmounting her ebony visage, who bent her stiff old knees in a jerky little obeisance to the lord of the manor, and then stood at attention.

Devereux Seaton looked up from his pineapple.

"Ah, granny, you've brought a message from his excellency?"

Granny lifted her hands to her head and unfastened a document pinned there, which, in silence and with another genuflection, she handed to the master. She was a telegraph-boy, and had brought the telegram from the office five miles away, on foot, as was the Jamaican custom—and on the head always, whether the consignment weighed fifty pounds or one ounce.

"Now I hope the governor isn't going to command my services at this juncture!" remarked the old man as he opened the despatch. The next moment he uttered an exclamation of pleasure. "A cable from Matilda—Mrs. Seaton!" he cried joyfully. "They've modified their plans, and will be back here to-morrow morning. Good news, granny! Here's a shilling for you!" he added, searching the capacious depths of his white linen pocket.

"A hundred years ago it would have been a guinea at least," thought Matthew to himself, observing the little scene with sympathetic smiles.

Then he bestirred himself to consider the news as good as his friend did, but was fain to counterfeit a little. He could not rid himself of the persuasion that the "family" would not rise to the height of personal and social charm that he had found in the head of the house. The breed must be running out—probably dwindling to skin and bones and prominent teeth. It always did, for the white race cannot hold its own in a tropical island.

Matthew must remain long enough to meet them, of course, but then he must contrive to receive information which would require his immediate departure. Perhaps he might concoct a plot with granny to fetch him a cablegram to that effect. He had had a lovely impression of Mona and its environs; he would not suffer it to be spoiled by uncongenial companionships. By hook or by crook he must get away, and take up his sacred mission of following around the world the fair saint whom he worshiped.

Mr. Seaton did not notice his guest's preoccupation, and the evening passed off well enough. About ten o'clock the old gentleman confessed that he was wont to retire betimes, and Matthew promptly enacted the part of the weary traveler scarce able to keep his eyes open. But after the great house had become quiet and dark, he stole down the ancient carved mahogany stairway in his pajamas, and let himself out on the marble veranda, softly illumined by the westering moon, and redolent with the rich odors from the garden.

It was a night worthy of *Juliet* and *Romeo*. In the east, the Southern Cross was lifting above the horizon. A white owl swept by on soundless wings, uttering a ghostly cry. Enormous fireflies flitted to and fro above the bushes, spangling them with light. For a long hour the love-lorn youth paced to and fro. It seemed impossible—incredible—that amid such an environment the girl who was the incarnation of all beauty should not appear!

Nevertheless Matthew continued to be the sole tenant of the veranda; and after finishing two more of Mr. Seaton's *Vuelta Abajos*, he gave up the hope of a miracle, and went to bed.

He dreamed that granny placed him on her head, went with enormous strides over sea and land, and set him down at last, with one of her jerky genuflections, face to face with—Boskom! This consummation was

so far from what he had expected that it woke him up, and he dressed and went down to breakfast.

While the Hon. Devereux Seaton was prattling gaily of delightful projects for entertaining his guest during the weeks to come, the young man, paying perfunctory attention to his host's discourse, was asking himself whether the obstacles that he had imagined between himself and Mayda really had any substantial foundation. A sapphire ring—was that conclusive evidence of a betrothal? Certainly not! Girls wear rings for a score of reasons, or for no reason at all. The smoking-room story about the old man receiving her at the railway-station? Haven't old men a prescriptive license to kiss girls, even as the storyteller had intimated? Was the mother a mercenary tyrant? What ground had he for supposing so? All he knew of her was her back, and how was a middle-aged lady's back to convey trustworthy intelligence as to the qualities of her soul?

Positively, now that Matthew marshaled the circumstances before him in the light of a Jamaica morning and of cool reason, there was nothing in them to cause anxiety, except that he had lost the trail, and that he didn't know the surname of her whom he sought. But she couldn't fail to be at some winter retreat or another. The number of these might be large, but it was not infinite, and what he had to do was to visit them all!

The trip to the wharf was to be made in the old family carriage, and there would be room enough in it for Matthew along with the rest; but after glancing at a mental picture of himself squeezed in beside the old gentleman and an anemic son, and looking into the faces of Matilda and a bony daughter with prominent teeth, he discovered that he had some important correspondence to attend to, and that the most convenient hour for it would be precisely while Mr. Seaton was absent on this little journey.

The latter rather reluctantly acceded to this arrangement, and Matthew had the transient satisfaction of seeing his host trundle off in the ponderous vehicle, leaving him to engross the name of Mayda on his letter-paper, and to make vain attempts to draw her indescribable profile. Oh, the delicate tip of that nose! Oh, the ravishing little curve of that upper lip! Oh, the imperial sweep of that eyelid! Raphael him-

self might throw down his pencil in despair before such a model.

He longed to be off—to take the wings of the morning and fly away like a bird. He got up from his writing-table and went out on the veranda, but the beauty of nature was beautiful no longer, and the fragrance of the garden was faint. He tramped to and fro impatiently, and his senses were so dulled by his internal turmoil that presently he found himself caught unawares. The carriage was actually at the entrance, and the people were getting out!

He adjusted himself promptly, and had ready a complacent mask with which to undergo the necessary introductions. There were two ladies; the son didn't seem to be there. To be sure, there might be no son, for aught he knew to the contrary. He had merely taken one for granted, as he had taken several other things; but there was no question about the mother and daughter.

After all, a son would have been preferable; for what if the young lady were to prove to be sentimental, or a "beautiful soul," or a musician, or devoted to uplift—and what more likely? He resolved, in the few instants while they were looking on the floor of the carriage for something one of them thought she had dropped, that he would avoid the delay and bother of conspiring with granny about the forged cablegram, and would boldly assert, right off, that the message had but just now been received which would compel him—oh, so reluctantly!—to be off to-morrow.

Both the ladies were veiled. The dear old master of the house, eager to perform his little ceremony, was undulating on tip-toe, waving his arms with gestures of presentation, and smiling with kindly human impulses. Matthew stood just within the deep shadow cast by the veranda, prepared to play his part. One of the ladies, her foot on the step, turned back to give some instructions to the driver; the other advanced, convoyed by the husband—or the father, as it might turn out.

"Matthew—Mr. Madison—I take great pleasure in presenting you to my daughter. Let me assist you in removing your veil, my dear!"

"Father's been telling us so much about you that I feel as if I knew you already," said a voice of marvelous richness and sweetness; and the veil was twisted aside

by a graceful sweep of hand and wrist. As her eyes met his, she broke into an amused laugh. "Why, so we are next thing to knowing each other, aren't we?"

"By George!" said Matthew.

Whether he were in heaven or on earth, in the flesh or in the spirit, he could not have ventured to affirm; but he was shaking hands with Mayda!

III

MRS. SEATON may have been up-stairs unpacking. Mr. Seaton may have been down in the stables, giving directions for the long drive up the mountain to the barracks on the summit, which they were going to take the next day. It didn't matter! The moonlight was stealing over the garden of roses and orange-blossoms, and Matthew and Mayda were pacing slowly, side by side, up one enchanted path and down another, and looking, to an outsider, very much like a pair of lovers.

"Oh, that was Uncle Charles—mother's brother—that met us at Jacksonville. We were to have spent a week with them; but they'd had news that their married daughter was ill in New Orleans, and aunt was going to see her, so we decided to come right on home. How funny, the way things turn out! Father has often spoken of your father, but we didn't know anything about Mr. Matthew Madison, Jr., till to-day."

"Nor I of you, or of Jamaica—and I never imagined what you'd be like!"

"You like our little old island, don't you? I haven't traveled very much, but I've never seen anything else so lovely."

Matthew plucked a cluster of orange-blossoms at the corner of the path, and turned to present them to her, looking her in the eyes.

"Nor I!" said he, giving his voice an intonation designed to convey the fact that it was not only of the island that he was speaking.

She raised the white flowers to her bewitching nose for a moment.

"They're sweet, aren't they? Almost too sweet, don't you think? But orange-blossoms aren't the rarity with us that they are with you in the North. Thank you just the same!"

The rejoinder didn't altogether please Matthew. It wasn't so much the words, but he fancied there was a trace of coolness in the tone. He was thrilling with love. It had been growing upon him

throughout the day; she was so far more adorable than he had thought, impossible as that might seem.

She was a sumptuous young princess, with full shoulders and deep bosom, moving with a leisurely yet elastic gait, full of latent power, as if restraining an impulse to leap and run. Her costume was a very simple one—a chiffon of violet hue. He had admired it at dinner; her softly rounded arms were visible through it, and the stately setting of her neck on her shoulders. She wore no jewelry, except the sapphire ring—that problematic ring, with its possibility of terrible significance! Now that he knew the narrow circumstances in which this once affluent family was constrained to live, the presence of an ornament so costly on Mayda's finger was more than ever difficult to explain, save on the one intolerable hypothesis.

And yet Mayda didn't seem to him like an engaged girl. There was an emanation from her of untamed virginity, of maiden freedom. He could not believe that the innocent pride of those sweet lips had ever felt the pressure of a lover's. For all her poise, there was a delicious wildness about her.

Several times he had tried to screw up his courage to the point of asking her about the ring. Had he been an unimpassioned and indifferent acquaintance—what a preposterous supposition that was!—he could have done it naturally and easily enough; but how shall a man control the tremor of his voice and subdue the fire in his eyes in asking a question upon the reply to which hangs his every hope of happiness? It were much easier to face a firing-squad with steady gaze and firm lips. He longed and yet dreaded that she would introduce the subject herself.

From the first, she had been delightfully liberal and unconstrained with him, almost as if he had been some near relative, seen for the first time, but with whom formal ceremony might be disregarded. Well, her father and his had been as brothers in the old time; so he and Mayda might regard themselves as cousins by right of paternal affection.

He had striven his best to imitate her easy bearing; but the effort was telling on him. No doubt something had broken bounds when he tendered her the orange-flowers, and she had instantly perceived and parried it.

However, they continued their perambulation. The paths between the overhanging boughs and crowding bushes were narrow, and his shoulder would occasionally touch hers. She didn't seem to avoid these slight contacts, exactly, but she certainly didn't seek them.

Suddenly she looked round at him with a little laugh.

"By the way, I never apologized to you for waking you up out of your nap."

"What can you mean?" he demanded in frank surprise.

"Don't you remember? When I picked up your paper, you'd been reading 'Love at First Sight'—I'd been reading it myself, and don't blame you for falling asleep over it—and I startled you so that you jumped as if I'd run a hatpin into you!"

"Oh, I wasn't asleep. That wasn't a nap; you might call it a dream, though!"

"A dream? I hope it was a nice one—or, rather, since I disturbed it, I hope it wasn't!"

Matthew lost his grip on the reins for a moment.

"It was a dream of love at first sight—not of the story, though!"

"Do you think it a dream? I've always believed that love at first sight is a reality."

"So it is a reality—though I never used to think so!"

This was plain enough speaking; but it seemed to reach her no more than if she had been on another plane of existence. His agitation found no echo in her. They had come to a bench at the western end of the garden. The dark mass of Kingston, with lights twinkling here and there, lay at a few miles' distance, and beyond that, the sea and the pinnacled rocks.

"I always like to sit here a few minutes before going in," she remarked, suiting the action to the word. "Do you mind? People don't catch cold here. It's a nicer place to dream in than the seat in a railway-car. If you'd like to try it, I'll go in and leave you to yourself."

Was this a challenge? His eyes questioned hers; but hers met his pointblank, and the smile that curved her lips had a satirical flavor. She had resented his offer to be sentimental with a betrothed girl, and was checking him betimes—that was Matthew's interpretation. He bit his lip and sat down.

"I like it here," was all he allowed himself to say.

"I suppose father has told you the legend of Nobleman Jack?" she resumed in a perfectly amicable tone, as of a lovely schoolmistress taking a recalcitrant pupil back into favor upon his showing symptoms of repentance.

For some reason, she appeared to imagine that he and Devereux Seaton had told each other every detail of their past lives. This was the second time she had given such an intimation; he wondered what the dear old gentleman had told *her*! Could Matthew have said anything startling without knowing it, or that had been open to misinterpretation?

"Nobleman Jack? No, I never heard of him. What a romantic name!"

"Isn't it? And the legend fits him. The thing happened about the beginning of the last century. It was over the wall, right here where we're sitting, that he's said to have escaped. He had a horse waiting below, you see."

"What was he escaping from?"

"Why, from us—that is, the 'us' of a hundred years ago. Only we knew nothing about it till next morning, and then it was too late."

"Was he eloping with the heiress?"

"No; none of our heiresses have ever done anything of that kind. When we loved a man that loved us, we were always married here in the house, in the old-fashioned style. We are very old-fashioned in Jamaica."

She said this, Matthew fancied, with a certain emphasis, as much as to imply that a betrothal promise, once given, was final in the Seaton code. He felt a trifle restive under such watchful pressure.

"I'm interrupting the legend, I'm afraid."

"No, but I seemed to be telling it backward. It begins with a very distinguished personage, the Baron Johannes Lassalles de Ferronovo, who turned up here in the course of his travels around the world. He was superb to look at, a man of princely bearing and delightful conversation. As for his wealth, he had a dinner-dress of black silk velvet and small-clothes, and when he first entered the dining-saloon he appeared to be totally without ornaments or decorations; but when the light from the chandelier struck him, lo and behold, his whole vest, from chin to waist, was buttoned up with great diamonds! It was like a flash of lightning in a dark night."

"By George!" murmured Matthew.

"Probably that led the conversation to the subject of precious stones, and the baron, who seemed to consider his vest-buttons a trifling matter, said that jewels and stones were a fad of his, and that the collection belonging to his family, to which he had added a great deal, was said to be the finest in Europe, outside of those of royalty. Of course, he had brought with him only a few trifles; but he put his hand in his vest pocket and brought out an emerald worth several thousand pounds, which he said he carried as a luck-penny. Then he remembered a ruby that he thought might be in his dressing-case. A servant was sent up-stairs for the case; and sure enough, after poking around in it for a while, out came the ruby, which was such a wonderful stone that if it had been anybody but the baron, one would have said it must be imitation. He passed these costly treasures around the table as if they'd been ordinary pebbles from the beach, or he an Aladdin who could order his jinn to fetch him buckets full of them, any time. Mustn't it have been exciting?"

"Great!" said Matthew.

Her eyes, as she gave herself to the story, were too unendurably beautiful to meet, and he kept his directed toward the gigantic ceiba-tree that rose outside the garden and spread out its great island of dark-some foliage high aloft. Only by fits and starts did he permit himself a side glance at that azure splendor, from which the moon drew sparkles.

"Well, you see, we had imagined, up to this time, that the Seaton jewels were a pretty fine collection. The pride, or vanity, of my great-great-grandfather was aroused; so by and by he ordered the butler to bring down the famous silver box."

"The silver box? What was that?"

"Oh, it was an heirloom from China, or India, or some such place, which had been in the family for generations. It was elaborately carved all over with dragons and goblins and lotus-flowers and mystical emblems; and on top of the cover, for a knob to take hold of, was a demon squatting with his legs folded in front of him, and an oriental leer on his face. I've heard father describe it a thousand times."

"Do you mean that it's been lost?"

"Well, I'm going to tell you." Here, however, she broke off. "I've spoiled the story!" she said.

"Why, you've only begun it!"

"Yes, but you've already guessed that the Baron Johannes Lassalles de Ferronovo was Nobleman Jack, and that he stole our jewels."

"Oh, not at all! I was following you step by step, and you were telling it divinely. Please go on!"

She laughed.

"You're very nice and polite about it, but some of us Seatons have second sight, or the sixth sense, or whatever it is, and know what people are thinking before they say it."

"Can you tell what I'm thinking? I should fancy it would be easy!" he broke out.

But she tranquilly avoided the point.

"At any rate, it's a pity that our ancestor didn't have his occult faculty about him at that juncture, for it would have saved us at least a hundred thousand pounds' worth of lovely jewels, which would have been useful, after the slaves were emancipated and sugar went down, in better ways than wearing them. The baron, after carefully examining them—the box was full of them—and praising them in a very courteous, superior, patronizing manner, thanked great-great-grandfather, and began talking about something else; and that night he took them, box and all, off the table beside the bed in which our poor deluded ancestor and his wife were sleeping. To avoid disturbing his hosts by unlocking the front door, he let himself out of his bedroom window into the garden, and so over this wall, where his confederates had horses ready, and down to a boat waiting for them outside the harbor. By the time we woke up, they were out of sight below the horizon."

"But was nothing heard of the rascal afterward?"

"Yes; Nobleman Jack was a famous pirate and adventurer of those days—one of the last of the old buccaneers—and there were a hundred anecdotes about him. The last story was that he was in a sea-fight somewhere off the coast of Honduras, and his crew was slaughtered and his ship sunk; but his body was never found. Of course it was said that he had escaped with our box to a little island in that neighborhood, where he was in the habit of going; but the only sure thing is that we never got our jewels back."

"A real old-fashioned treasure story!"

muttered Matthew. His eyes were resting absently upon the dense mass of foliage below the wall. Suddenly he looked more intently. "Are there any large wild animals on this island?" he inquired.

"No—except the iguanas, which are about four feet long, but quite harmless. Did you see anything?"

"I fancied something moved down there, but probably I was mistaken."

"Iguanas never come down here. They keep in the wild places up the mountain."

They looked at each other.

"Shall we go in?" she asked.

Her left hand rested on the back of the bench, and the moonlight flashed on the sapphire ring.

"That's a beautiful ring you have," he remarked, as if he noticed it for the first time. "Is it a survivor of the silver box?"

"No, it's not an heirloom," she replied carelessly. "I had it from a friend." He waited with his heart in his mouth. Would she say anything more? "It's—an engagement ring," she added, after a moment's hesitation.

She got up and moved toward the house, and he followed her with leaden steps.

IV

THE ride up to the barracks having been arranged for the day following, Matthew made up his mind, that night, to depart from the island on the morning after that. All was lost, for him, and nothing could be gained by staying longer. He had given up his resolve to commit homicide; it wouldn't meet the conditions of the case. Evidently Mayda was betrothed to a man she loved, and they were to be married, after the Seaton custom, in that house. The sooner Matthew was out of it the better.

It seemed to young Madison that fate was pursuing him with an animosity peculiarly and needlessly virulent. Why couldn't he have been spared meeting Mayda? Why couldn't he have taken an earlier or a later train? Why did his father entrust him with the letter to Seaton? Why must he have lingered in that garden and paced that veranda and yearned to have Mayda beside him, only to have his yearning gratified to his own torture and despair? Why, in short, was he doomed to fall in love with the promised bride of another? Why was he born, since his life must be passed in unavailing misery?

Mr. Seaton had placed a fresh box of the Vuelta Abajos on his guest's dressing-table, and it had been considerably depleted by the time Matthew fell into the sleep of exhaustion. He woke in ample time for breakfast, regretting that he couldn't sleep forever. But when he saw Mayda at the breakfast-table, pouring the clear milk of green coconuts into goblets, she was more irresistible than ever, not to mention the fact that she was attired in her riding costume, which was like pouring oil on poor Matthew's fire. No nymph of ancient Greece was ever so graceful!

"If it's agreeable to you, Matthew," Mr. Seaton said, "you and Mayda will go on horseback, while my wife and I occupy the light gig. The family carriage is heavy for the long pull up the mountain."

"But perhaps Matthew would prefer driving with me in the gig?" Mrs. Seaton put in.

Matthew, since becoming acquainted with this lady, had been a prey to remorse for having so misjudged her on the train. He saw now that even her back revealed none of the rapacious traits with which he had credited her. She was a motherly, amiable old lady, and here was an opportunity graciously held forth to Matthew to make atonement; but the drive up the mountain would be hours long, and though to ride beside Mayda through that romantic scenery would but turn the spear in his wound, he lacked strength to deny himself the delicious agony. He said that he needed exercise, and would like to ride.

"Now I'll peel an orange for you, Jamaica style," said Mayda, after she had prepared a glass of coconut juice for him.

"This is an art indigenous to our island," said her father. "What was it Jeff said, Mayda, when you first did it for him?"

"Oh, Jeff, of course, would say anything," replied Mayda, with a blush.

"I remember it, word for word," said Mrs. Seaton, smiling over her alligator pear. "He said, 'If we ever get poor, you and I will tour the States, and you shall peel oranges for the millionaires at a hundred dollars an orange—one dollar for the orange and ninety-nine dollars for seeing you peel it.' He is wonderfully clever!"

"So Jeff is the supremely lucky man, is he?" growled Matthew inwardly. "Jeff what, I wonder?"

"You would have to take a case of our oranges along with you," commented

Devereux Seaton, by way of giving Matthew useful information, "because the Jamaica orange is the only variety whose inner skin is tough and elastic enough not to break while you are squeezing the juice of it into your mouth through the little aperture cut in the side. They grow wild here, and we hold the flavor to be incomparable."

Meantime Mayda, wielding a sharp silver knife with those wonderful, supple fingers, had removed all the outer yellow rind, and handed the fruit to Matthew clothed only in its soft white blanket.

"You'll confess that you never sucked so sweet an orange in your life," said her father. "That's what Jeff said!"

Matthew was tempted to ask whether Jeff had ever been in Jericho, being strongly moved to promote his being sent there, whether or no; but he refrained. He absorbed the orange. It was certainly very sweet, but the fingers that had peeled it were sweeter; and they had peeled oranges—dozens of oranges, probably—for Jeff! That bitter reflection mingled with the delicate flavor, and turned it into gall.

Matthew was unable to play his part in the kindly amenities of the breakfast-table. He nibbled and sipped and ate little, and excused himself early to go up to his room and put on his riding-breeches. When he came down, the horses were at the door, Mayda was mounted, and Mrs. Seaton was in the gig. The master of the house was waiting courteously till Matthew should have thrown himself into his saddle, and then the party proceeded.

The road on both sides was high-embowered with tropic verdure, and through the green arcade Matthew and Mayda rode in advance of the gig. They skirted precipitous declivities, sheer above and headlong below; they entered level stretches meet for a gallop; they paused at high coigns of vantage to gaze out at the widening views and await the coming of the gig. The main road was barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass.

Up and up! The air lost its tropic quality and became lighter, keener, purer. Overhead, Matthew had noticed for some time past a white cumulus cloud resting against the mountainside. All at once the riders passed into it, and minute atoms of moisture glistened on their tunics and riding-breeches. Pressing on, they presently emerged from the cloud into clear air, under a sky of darker blue.

"Above the clouds with you!" exclaimed Matthew. "Oh, to go on forever!"

It was her whim to take a more practical view.

"We're not very far from the barracks now," said she, "and from what they say I judge that living above the clouds isn't very comfortable. The men consider it a great favor to be allowed a day off once a month, and they spend it in walking down to the city and back—about twenty miles. I prefer our rose-garden down at Mona."

"Is it never cold there?" inquired Matthew sardonically.

"We're getting too far beyond our party," was her rejoinder. "Oh, I see them, just rounding the turn below there. Steady, Saladin!" Saladin was her horse, a half Arabian, sensitive and spirited. "The darling! See how he dances and prances, after all that climb, with me on his back, too! He knows I'll give him a lump of sugar when we get there."

She caressed his glistening neck and cooed to him lovingly. Matthew suppressed a groan.

"Come on!" said Mayda.

The road, continually curving out of sight before them, suddenly passed out of the arcade of foliage into a naked tract of the upper mountain, with a tremendous declivity on the left—a rocky wall, receding hardly ten degrees from the vertical, and plunging a thousand feet at a breath. The only protection for travelers was a stone parapet about a foot in height along the margin of the road, whitewashed for visibility at night.

"It's a death-trap," muttered Matthew, glancing down the abyss.

Mayda, riding with a free rein, had forged several yards ahead of him, and was now crossing the crest of a little rise, which took a dip beyond. She was silhouetted there for a moment, and then sank out of sight. He touched his mount with the whip, and followed.

Six soldiers, in short scarlet jackets and white trousers, had been sitting side by side on the parapet: they were out on a day's leave. As the horsewoman came upon them, they jumped to their feet as one man and saluted, probably mistaking her for the wife of one of the officers. Saladin rose on his hind legs.

Mayda had been a good rider since her childhood, and there would have been no danger except for the precipice—just as

there would be none in a cannon-ball, but for the powder behind it. She rose in her stirrups and leaned against the horse's neck, to weight him down. He had his back to the parapet. Unluckily the soldiers, anxious to help, came running forward, causing Saladin fresh alarm. He stood up straighter than ever, and staggered on his hind feet, which were now but a few inches from the parapet. Mayda would have flung herself from the saddle, but there was not space to avoid the drop to death into the abyss.

Matthew, coming at full speed, saw that the rush of his horse might cause Saladin to take the one fatal step backward. At the last moment, therefore, he swerved violently to the right, at the same time leaping to the ground, and with another bound he was beside Saladin. His thought was to drag the girl from the saddle into his arms. They might both go over the brink, but it seemed the only chance.

Mayda, however, had kept her self-control, and she acted instantaneously upon another idea. Saladin's head was too high aloft for Matthew to catch him by the bit; but she flung the reins deftly over the animal's head, so that they hung down in front of him. Matthew snatched at the loop, fastened his grip upon it, and, shortening his hold, pulled the horse downward and inward. By this time Saladin was incapable of taking a reasonable view of the predicament; and as Mayda, improving her opportunity, sprang safely to her left to the ground, the horse wheeled furiously in the other direction on his hind feet, swinging Matthew, still hanging to the bit, clear over the verge of the parapet.

The episode would probably have ended with horse and man taking the drop to the bottom of the cliff, but for the intervention of one of the men in scarlet jackets—a tall Cornishman, all bone and muscle from top to toe. He had coolly kept track of the proceedings from the start, and now, as Matthew's body swung out on an arc, he reached out over the gulf and grabbed him by the legs below the knees, Matthew relinquishing his grasp on the bit at the same instant.

The Cornishman, with his burden in his arms, teetered for a moment, and might have fallen after all, had not one of his companions caught his landward hand, so that down he went on his back on the road, with Matthew on top of him, and nobody

hurt. Saladin, trembling and sweating, stood alongside, his head lowered to the ground.

"A bit of a good job, sir, all round, take it by long and large," remarked the Cornish giant, picking himself up as soon as Matthew had scrambled off him, and brushing the dust from his jacket. "'Tis better here than below, as the man said when the rhinoceros treed 'im. Is all right with ye, miss, askin' yer pardon?"

Mayda's red roses, now that all was over, had given place to white. She looked the soldier in the face as he addressed her, and then stepped up to him, put her arms around his neck, and kissed him on the mouth. He uttered a roar of amazement, and, taking a pace to the rear, stumbled over the back of one of the squad, who was stooping just then to pick up Matthew's hat. The two men rolled together in the road, guffawing and cuffing each other, while Mayda tottered over to the parapet, sat down on it, and hid her face in her hands. It had all passed in a minute, and now the gig rolled serenely up with Mr. and Mrs. Seaton.

"I was just saying to Matilda that I hoped you wouldn't miss this view. It's about the finest on the road," said Mr. Seaton placidly, bringing the gig to a halt.

Mrs. Seaton was more observant.

"What's the matter, Mayda? Oh, has anything happened?"

After the explanations and exclamations were over—Matthew told the tale as conservatively as possible—one of the soldiers, who had been paying little attentions to Saladin, ventured the statement that the animal would be the better for a currycomb, and said that he himself, having been an ostler in his previous existence, was willing to take him up to the barracks, a mile farther on, and act as his valet.

"A nice bit o' 'orseflesh, that," he remarked. "'Twould be a pity if he took a chill."

The colonel in command of the regiment was a friend of the Seatons, and neither Mayda nor Saladin was in condition for the trip back to Mona at present, so it was decided to adopt the ex-ostler's suggestion. The Cornishman, with the rest of the squad, had already retreated down the road. Mayda took her father's place in the gig with her mother, and the three men, leading Saladin, following them on foot to the station.

While the ex-ostler was giving Seaton a livelier account of the late occurrence than Matthew's modesty, or his prudence, had allowed him to do in Mrs. Seaton's hearing, the young man had leisure to think over Mayda's unexpected behavior to the Cornishman. Matthew had, perhaps, saved Mayda's life; the Cornishman had undoubtedly saved Matthew's; yet Mayda's kiss had been bestowed, not on Matthew, but on the Cornishman! What might be the esoteric meaning of that fact?

The twenty minutes or more consumed in walking up the hill did not prove time enough for the solution of this riddle. It was unthinkable that a betrothed girl, who had already rebuffed certain significant manifestations on his part, should value his life more than her own. It was more conceivable, though still unlikely, that she had been so confused by agitation that she didn't realize what she was doing.

A third hypothesis was that she had been moved by a passion of gratitude for the rescue of Saladin from peril; but wasn't a kiss—such a kiss!—a grotesquely disproportionate reward for such a service? To Matthew, who would have bartered his life in exchange for it, it seemed so; but the emotions and impulses of girls are notoriously a mystery.

Meanwhile Mayda's father, with tears in his kind old eyes, had thrown an arm across Matthew's shoulders, and was thanking him for the inestimable service he had rendered.

"You can understand, dear fellow, that in the circumstances I can't speak out what is in the bottom of my heart, but if any return for such a deed were possible, you know I'd make it! I'd better say no more—and you must forgive me for so much."

This sounded a little as if Mayda's father would have preferred Matthew for a son-in-law to Jeff, but was too conscientious to advocate breaking a pledge given, and too tender a parent to urge Mayda to reconsider it against her will. Verily, things were going from bad to worse!

"We mustn't trifle with destiny, of course," the young man said. "By the way, who is Jeff?"

He had intended to be too proud to ask that question, but such intentions require careful watching to preserve their integrity.

"Jeff? Oh, he's an old friend—an old young one, like yourself. He's a son of Washington Morton, you know, the lumber

man—owns two or three hundred thousand acres in Nova Scotia. Why, he and your father—I've had them both at my house here, thirty years ago. I thought you and Jeff would know each other."

"You don't mean Jack Morton, do you?" demanded Matthew, in a voice suddenly turned husky, and turning to the old man with a startled stare.

"No—Jefferson is the only name we know him by—or Jeff, for short."

Matthew smote his thigh with his clenched fist.

"I see! Very stupid of me! Jack Morton—or Jeff—was my chum in college. A small chap, not over five feet six, but a capital gymnast, and a great boating man. We nicknamed him Lumberjack Morton on account of his father's business, and it got abbreviated to Jack. I'd almost forgotten what his real name was. I haven't seen him for some years. He's a member of the Yacht Club, isn't he? Well, Mr. Seaton, if it had to be somebody, it couldn't be a better fellow than Jack—or Jeff!"

He uttered these words with a manly firmness and candor. Of all men alive, Jack Morton was the one whom he would least think of trying to supplant; so now, indeed, the last hope was gone. Mayda and Jack—kismet!

"Yes, yes—capital fellow," Mr. Seaton agreed. "I believe he's cruising somewhere in these waters in his yacht, the Capable Kate. Might drop in on us any day."

Oh, he might, might he? Decidedly, then, to-morrow should witness Matthew's departure. He knew when he had had enough!

They were now at the gate of the barracks, and the next two hours, so far as Matthew was concerned, were a jumble of meaningless ceremonies, social amenities, an officers' mess, military anecdotes, and cigars and hot Scotch. Mayda was always before his eyes, but she seemed like a figure at a vast distance, in a world inaccessible. He avoided speaking to her.

When the story of the accident was related, and Matthew's conduct was glowingly extolled by Mr. Seaton, Mayda sat silent, with downcast eyes. Matthew's replies to courteous comments and queries were so curt and cold as to be almost boorish; but this was good-naturedly ascribed to his modesty.

Word came from the stables that Saladin was still very nervous, and would be the

better for a night at the barracks. Every one of the officers, young and old, immediately proffered Mayda a mount, but she politely but coldly declined all their offers. The colonel *then* proposed driving her down himself in his runabout; and to this she consented.

"I don't think I shall ever feel inclined to ride again," she remarked.

"Oh, it's shaken you up a bit, but you'll soon get over it," said the colonel kindly.

"I don't think I want to get over it," she replied, but in a tone so low that perhaps no one but Matthew heard it.

The saying perplexed him. He knew she had courage a plenty, but possibly she didn't wish to run any more risks with Jeff's fiancée. Well, it was none of his business!

She and the colonel, in the runabout, led the way down the mountain, Matthew riding beside the gig containing Mr. and Mrs. Seaton. He took the opportunity to announce the necessity of his leaving Jamaica next day. Remonstrances were vain; he was adamant.

"But you'll be coming back soon," said Mrs. Seaton affectionately. "If Jeff can manage it, we hope to have his wedding at Mona next month. You must try to be there!"

Matthew's smile was like that of the Spartan boy when the wild beast was devouring his entrails. He to be present at Mayda's wedding—as best man, perhaps!

On pretense of packing and letter-writing, he spent the afternoon in his room. He feared to be alone with Mayda. The barrier between them seemed to be yielding; he must protect her, if necessary, against herself.

When the dinner-gong sounded, he ran quickly down the great mahogany staircase. Mayda stepped out from behind the newel-post at the foot. She was tremulous, and her voice was scarcely audible.

"May I speak to you? Since you're going—and this is the end—I wanted to be sure you understood. I can't tell why I behaved as I did. It was too much—how could I be myself? Oh, I have seen—I have known—and the only right thing is to part; but I needed to feel sure that you know, and understand. It would be harder if we didn't know. And this is the end!"

He took her hand; but for a moment only could he endure to look in her face. He bent over her hand and kissed it; it

was the hand that wore the sapphire ring. Those soft, silken, cold fingers! They gripped his hand for a moment; then she snatched them away and turned from him with a sob.

"Steady!" he said.

He passed before her slowly and laid his hand on the latch of the dining-room door. After a few moments he opened it, and they went in.

V

MATTHEW'S bunk in the *Señorita Felicidad* was much unlike the cool luxury of the stately bed at Mona which had been his two nights before.

The *Señorita* was a schooner of much experience and few attractions. Had she been low, black, with raking masts and a skull-and-crossbones flag, she might almost, so far as age went, have been Nobleman Jack's property; but in fact she was built with an eye, not to crime and gold, but to sugar and bananas and the like virtuous cargoes. She was tubby and plodding. Yet, broad of beam though she was, her cabin accommodations were suffocating, and Matthew would have preferred making the trip on deck, had the cases, bales, sacks, barrels, and bundles accumulated there afforded room to stretch out.

The crew consisted of a turbaned oriental, three negroes, and a Chinaman—an ape-like and sinister creature. The captain was a squat-built British islander; and there was one passenger besides Matthew—Mr. Phineas Boskom!

Matthew had not picked out the *Señorita Felicidad* for her beauty and comforts, but because at the juncture she had been the only vessel bound in his direction; and anything was better than passing another day in the neighborhood of the girl he worshipped. Of such paradoxical elements is man made!

After that interview at the foot of the staircase, two days ago, he had assumed a false gaiety at table, drank more wine than was his habit, and entertained Seaton and his wife with drolleries. Did he understand, Mayda had asked him? Yes, he understood that, but for Jeff, earth might have been Eden. The breath of death on the mountain-top had blown away pretenses. Mayda had lifted her veil, and Matthew would not make her struggle harder; the word of a Seaton must not be broken. Besides, Jeff Morton was his

friend, and we don't supplant our friends in their love-affairs. It isn't done!

At the turn of the drive at Mona, as he drove away, he had turned to see Mayda wave her hand—and that was the end. Now for solitude and sorrow!

But the apparition of Boskom had apprized him that solitude, at least, hadn't yet begun. Up went the monocle.

"What? Mr. Madison, upon my word! It is surely a pleasure to see your smiling face again!"

Boskom must have been a profound observer to have detected a smile on Matthew's face at that juncture; but it was no use antagonizing the man. The distance to Trujillo, the Señorita's port, was a long six hundred miles, and she was capable of taking six days, or more, to make it.

"I thought you were to have gone on before this," I said. "Where's the menagerie?"

"Blessed if I know, sir—or my salary, which was to have been awaitin' me in Kingston, what's more! Them Andersons is no better than Nobleman Jack himself."

Matthew was first startled, then irritated, at hearing the hero of Mayda's story named by this fellow.

"What do you know about Nobleman Jack?" he demanded.

"Bless you, every one speaks of 'im in these seas. Why, Mr. Madison, the boys in the circus, who've knocked about some in these latitudes, calls our big eddicated hape after him; but you, not havin' been as low as this before, wouldn't naturally 'ave 'eard the yarn. They say he stole half a million dollars in jewelry, sir, from one o' these Jamaica swells, in days gone by, an' buried it in one o' these 'ere cays to the southward of us. Ah, if them cays could talk, we'd 'ear tales! But, as I was sayin', the boys named our big hape Nobleman Jack. That hape, sir, would filch the handkerchief out o' your clothes as neat as any pickpocket, and he could pitch a baseball to beat Mathewson. A wonderful hanimal, Mr. Madison, and worth a thousand dollars, if a cent!"

Matthew broke away, resolved to spend the rest of the trip in his bunk; but the odors soon drove him on deck again. Boskom had disappeared, and the island, with all he loved, was robbing itself in lovely vapors. As the sun set, the breeze freshened, and the first night on board passed somehow, though Matthew was kept awake by

sounds of revelry forward, amid which the voice of Boskom was audible. If the fellow would but get dead drunk and stay so!

Next morning the breeze had dropped, and the crew were gathered along the starboard rail, staring at a tramp steamer about half a mile distant. The faint air brought down from her a sickening and offensive odor—a stench that reminded Matthew of the cattle-trains on Riverside Drive in New York. The behavior of the steamer was odd, for she yawed and wheeled on the calm water. Occasionally there came from her noises like the outcries of beasts. A vessel full of beasts, yet abandoned by her crew! But was not that a man climbing the shrouds?

Boskom was on the bridge, in an altercation with the captain. He came down, evidently still thick in the head from the festival of the night before. He stumbled toward Matthew, bleary and grumbling.

"The skipper—confound 'im!—says it's yellow fever, an' won't go no nearer; an' that hape alone would net me a thousand! No live men aboard her, he says, an' no menagerie for him! So that's all about Anderson! Well, serve 'em right for bilking me of my salary! Well, what are you grinnin' at, Matthew Madison, Esquire? Think I'm drunk, eh, and might let some-thin' slip? Yes, I could spin yarns, but old Phin Boskom warn't born yesterday! An' he ain't no iguana, neither! Pretty smooth article, you be, but I got your measure! A nat'ralist, 'untin' jewels—say an 'under thousan' poun' worth, eh? Well, maybe Phin Boskom is in on it, an' maybe not; an' maybe Matt Madison has maps an' di'grams in his clothes, an' maybe not! Just bug-'untin', that's all! Ever 'unt a she-bug with nice yellow hair an'—"

Matthew uppercut him with hearty good-will and without remorse—a beautiful blow. It landed at the juncture of Boskom's nose with his long upper lip, causing considerable pain, with no loss of consciousness. In going down, his head jammed between two barrels filled with farming implements, so that he was unable to extricate himself unaided.

Matthew observed his struggles for a few moments without sympathy—with a sensation of inward peace, rather. It is wonderful how much good a successful uppercut may do the purveyor of it. Finally he beckoned to one of the negroes to attend to the sufferer, and walked aft to

bathe the knuckles of his left hand, which were bleeding from contact with Boskom's front teeth.

A breeze now began to puff in from the north, and the Señorita Felicidad awoke from her reverie and sauntered in a south-westerly direction. Seated in the stern on a packing-case, with his back supported against a sack of potatoes, Matthew smoked one of the famous cigars, a box of which had been Devereux Seaton's parting gift, and contemplated the tramp steamer, still swinging aimlessly far away on the star-board quarter. It was a hideous incident—a crew disabled or dead of fever, and a cargo of wild animals let loose among them in their helplessness, and no succor possible!

He turned his thoughts to the tipsy vagabond whom he had righteously chastised. That stirring among the shrubbery at the foot of the wall at Mona was now explained; but what the rest of Boskom's drunken rigmarole meant he couldn't conjecture. The fellow seemed to have a notion that there was a search for pirate treasure in prospect. If he had a revolver, he might seek vengeance for his punishment; but Matthew was not alarmed. He dismissed the subject from his mind, and settled himself more commodiously against the potatoes. Other thoughts came to him.

What would be the manner of his existence during the next few years? To wander amid tropic forests and over lonely seas, "ever roaming with a hungry heart," as *Ulysses* says? What were animals and plants to him? Mayda would soon be married. She and Jack—Jeff—would set up housekeeping in New York, and if Matthew should return there, it would of course be impossible to avoid meeting them. Mayda the wife of another man! No, he must never return.

The breeze held gentle but steady till sundown, flying-fish and porpoises played their endless game of tag, the turbaned oriental stood naked and impassive at the wheel, and the rest of the crew dozed in the fore-castle. At dinner, the captain, who possessed a mouth so commodious that he could eat with one side of it and talk with the other, jerkily explained why it had been both impossible and inexpedient to board the tramp steamer. Incidentally he alluded to Boskom as a "bleeding rotter." Then he grinned terribly, and remarked that the person in question had been bleeding sure enough.

"I'll 'and it to you, sir—you did 'im up good an' proper!"

With the sun, down went the breeze, and by the time Matthew went to his bunk the Señorita was lying as motionless as a rock in the desert. The temperature indicated that the desert must be the Sahara, at least; but relief was on its way, and its arrival was sudden.

The first sensation of which Matthew was distinctly aware was of struggling for his life in a roaring chaos of sea water, and in pitch darkness, while a wind of immeasurable velocity was pinning him down. The Señorita had vanished.

It were vain to inquire just what occurred in Matthew's case previous to his finding himself over head and ears in the Caribbean. He was still in his pajamas, though these were speedily slashed into ribbons by the forces of nature; and it seems probable that he must have left his bunk and got on deck, from which he had then been swept by the wind, by the waves, or possibly by the main boom, which would be likely to part its halyards under such circumstances.

For the present, he forbore to speculate on the subject; but in the midst of his efforts to keep from drowning, he did a peculiar thing. He felt at his throat, to determine whether a locket were still there which for two days past he had been wearing attached to a string. He was greatly encouraged by finding that in the midst of the general chaos it had kept its place. He got his head above water, and struck out manfully.

This locket needs to be accounted for—not so much the locket itself, a pretty, old-fashioned trinket of gold, which had belonged to Matthew's mother, and which he had been wearing attached to his watch-guard. But the truth is that during his stay at Mona he had come upon an old family album in a corner of the spacious reception-room, and had found in it a photograph of Mayda. It was far from doing her justice; but it was at least a shadow of her, and all of her that he could ever hope to possess. Legally, he had no right to it; but morally and sentimentally it was manifestly his, and forthwith, without compunction, he opened his jack-knife and cut the head out of the card, trimmed it to fit the locket, and inserted it therein. He then destroyed the remnants of the card, and put on the mask of innocence.

Although an upright young man in his general walk in life, he had never repented of this deed, and the head had since then afforded him much consolation. There are germs of Nobleman Jack in us all.

The locket and its precious contents were a talisman. So long as he retained it, there would be hope even in the darkest hour; and an hour darker than that in which he had gone overboard was hardly within the compass of nature.

Whereabouts in the hurricane-thrashed, foam-smothered Caribbean was he? Several hundred miles from the mainland, beyond question; but the Seranillo Bank might not be so far off, and there were islets—cays—there. Wind and water were doing their best to strangle him, but he strove against unconsciousness. Life, to be sure, held nothing for him. Death is the proper medicine for disappointed love; but if Matthew were to die, he wished to do it in his own way. Nobody likes to be kicked and cuffed even in the direction of his own desire.

Amid the blackness, he felt a touch on his shoulder—not a blow, but as if an authoritative hand had notified him that he was under arrest.

"By George!" said Matthew.

Something prodded him gently in the back, and nudged him playfully in the flank. He flung an arm backward to investigate, and his fingers closed upon something that felt like a wooden bar. He writhed himself about and grappled with it. It held firm, and with a herculean effort he drew himself by it out of the water. The hurricane seemed to have abated, but the sea was more turbulent than ever, and Matthew realized that the apparent slackening of the gale was due to his being borne along by it, though by what agency he could not at first determine.

As a matter of fact it was a huge tree—a ceiba—which had apparently been uprooted and set afloat by the tornado, and transported to his succor at so opportune a juncture. After recovering some portion of his breath, Matthew felt around in the blackness for further support, and drew himself farther away from the raging torrent beneath. He was more exhausted than he would have thought possible in so brief a time.

With much difficulty he reached a crotch between the boughs which seemed to be temporarily safe. The giant structure of

the tree above him groaned and whistled in the gale. Its foliage seemed to have been stripped away, and snake-like lianas were whipped hither and thither and wrapped round the limbs. It was all very different from the stifling bunk in the *Señorita Felicidad*; not exactly luxurious, but airy enough, and more than cool enough—for Matthew was all but naked. Again he felt for the locket, and finding it there, kissed it fervently. In conditions so unusual, he thought that he had a right to do so.

He was very tired and very sleepy. He had had little sleep since leaving Mona, and he hadn't slept too soundly even there. He snuggled himself into a more convenient posture on the crotch. If the whole tree didn't roll over, he was all right. Presently, like others in desperate straits before him, he fell asleep.

He awoke just before dawn. The wind had passed, but the waves were rolling high, though their surface was oily smooth. Matthew had dreamed that soft fingertips had touched his face. Very light they had been, but there had been a gentle passing to and fro of something over his cheeks and breast. A dream, of course; for only a spirit disembodied could have come to him in his present predicament.

Cautiously he propped himself to an erect sitting position. He was as stiff as a walking-stick insect. A hot breakfast would be acceptable. In lieu of it, he felt for his locket. It was gone!

If Matthew had suddenly missed his heart out of his body, he couldn't have been more startled and dismayed. He scrambled to his feet; the big tree swayed dangerously, and he all but lost his balance. He continued to feel for the locket, down his back, under his armpits, around his waist, on surrounding projections of the tree, though all the while he miserably knew the futility of the search.

He sat down again at last, in stupefaction. How could he have lost his treasure? Could he himself have taken it off in his sleep? Inconceivable! Had he been mistaken in thinking that he had it when he fell asleep? Ridiculous! Had a pick-pocket alighted on the ceiba during the hurricane and made off with it? Had he gone insane?

One moment! What about those fingers in his dream?

Then those soft touches had not been an

illusion, but a reality! Then the thief, whoever he was, must be still on the tree! Then—

Once more Matthew lifted himself up, circumspcctly, for it was evident that the ceiba's balance in the water was unstable. The increasing light showed him that he was down among the upturn roots, and that the branches were at the other end of the long trunk, nearly a hundred feet away. He essayed to make the transit, but was soon satisfied that this was impracticable, for the ceiba rolled at his least movement. The waves were running too high for him to dive off and swim to the other end.

"Hello there!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

The sound flattened out in space, and brought no response. Was any one there, after all?

The sun rose, and with it came a gentle breeze. The waves gradually subsided, but the appearance of two or three large triangular fins, cutting the surface of the water this way and that, admonished the voyager that others besides himself were hungry for breakfast. He made another attempt to reach the other end of the tree, where there was enough foliage to offer some protection from the sun, but again he found it too risky.

What was that sound—a chuckle? It sounded like some one laughing throatily—laughing at Matthew. It gave him an unpleasant sensation, such as a man gets from the realization that his companion in a lonely spot is a maniac. For what sane human creature would be disposed to mirth in this predicament?

There wasn't one chance in a hundred that they would escape death by starvation and thirst. Who but a madman, indeed, would have thought of stealing the locket from Matthew's neck? The thing was of small intrinsic value; but had it been the Orloff diamond, it would be no more than a mockery to a castaway on the ocean.

Mad or sane, how came the creature on the ceiba? Could it be one of the crew of the *Señorita Felicidad*?

Why not—since Matthew himself was one?

In that case, which member of the ship's company? Not Boskom, assuredly; for that gross body was quite incapable of the agility which the conditions implied. One of the negroes, then? Or the Chinaman? Yes, that seemed the likeliest guess.

The Chinaman, on the schooner, had acted as cook. He had stayed in his galley most of the time, but Matthew had noticed that he was small, lean, and nimble in his movements. Chinamen are unaccountable people. The cook might always have been insane, or a shock like that of the sudden bursting of the tornado might have been enough to unseat his reason. It would be just like his crazy cunning to steal the locket, and then his insanity and his activity would prompt him and enable him to venture successfully on the perilous passage to the other end of the ceiba. Yes, the Chinaman it must be!

Matthew so placed himself as to have the branches of the tree in full view, and doggedly crouched there to keep watch. He was thirsty, hungry, bruised, blistered, and helpless, but he would miss no chance of recovering his locket.

Nothing happened, however, except that hour after hour went by. He sank into a torpor. The descending sun shone in his eyes. Night was coming on; was he to perish like this? Was there nothing to be done?

But Matthew was a thoroughbred, and thoroughbreds never say die. Life, at all events, was not complete without that locket; and before darkness fell, he was resolved to find out whether it was anywhere on the floating ceiba. He lifted himself painfully but resolutely to his feet once more. His joints cracked and his back seemed broken, but he stood erect at last.

Before moving forward he cast a careful glance round the horizon. East and north, nothing was visible. Westward, the glare on the surface of the water dazzled him. He looked southwest.

"Steady! Don't fool yourself, man! Maybe it's a mirage!"

He shielded his eyes from the glare and gazed again. It seemed to be four or five miles distant, and was in the path on which the ceiba was slowly drifting. It looked like a cluster of fairy mushrooms, with thread-like stems, penciled distinctly against the bloom of the clear sky. Very pretty, an artist might have called it; to the castaway, it was divinely beautiful. He made it out to be a speck of coral rock lifted above the sea, with palm-trees raising their feathery tops over it—one of the tiny cays of either the Serrano or the Roncador group. It meant a chance for life!

Observing that the ceiba was voyaging

head on, and that he was therefore in the stern-sheets, as it were, Matthew wrenched off part of a root, and used it as a rudder to steer the clumsy craft. In the midst of his labors, an odd noise made him look up quickly. It was that throaty chuckle again!

It had grown dusk. Nothing was to be seen in the forward part of the tree, nor was there any further sound. He had read that in those seas there are fishes which, coming to the surface with open mouths in calm weather, have the faculty of producing curious noises. When one's sensibilities are worn threadbare, one is apt to exaggerate and misinterpret impressions.

Matthew resumed his paddle. As the light died out in the west, he fixed the position of the cay by a star hanging just over it. The moon had not yet risen; for a long time he paddled by starlight alone. At last he felt a slight arrest of motion; the boughs of the ceiba had touched bottom! He threw himself into the water and staggered ashore. He was saved; but where was the Chinaman?

VI

THE Chinaman was not among the branches of the ceiba—Matthew was not long in ascertaining that. Of course not! It was only to be expected that, as his quarters in the tree had been the first to run aground, he had improved the opportunity to get out of sight before Matthew could get at him.

But the delay was transient only, and the islet could not be explored in the dark, anyway. Matthew schooled himself to wait, and meanwhile set about finding something to eat and drink.

He hadn't taken a dozen steps before he stumbled upon a coconut. He broke it carefully on a boulder, and drank the milk, sip by sip, as slowly as he could. It was delicious—not such as Mayda had prepared for him, indeed, but a life-saver! It stayed his stomach and allayed his thirst.

There would be a spring of water somewhere, but he could wait till morning to search for that. The whole shore of the islet seemed to be fringed with palms; there would be shell-fish in plenty, perhaps breadfruit, and yams. He had no matches with him to make a fire, but he knew how to produce a flame by the stick-rubbing process, for this was not the first time Matthew had been out in the wilds.

Only let him recover the locket, and he could pass a vacation here quite tolerably. The Chinaman, after they had settled their affair, should do the cooking. Clothing was needed; but he could contrive a cloak for himself, Japanese fashion, out of palm-leaves. Shoes? Well, he might plait himself a pair of straw sandals.

While making these plans, and drinking the milk of two more coconuts, Matthew squatted on the beach in front of the stranded ceiba. The moon had risen. The air was getting cool. Better try for a fire at once.

As he sat there he glanced about him for materials. The beach was strewn with driftwood, in some places piled high, probably by the gale. He picked up a piece and examined it. It was dry enough, but a particular kind of wood is needed. As he stooped forward to pick up another stick, something—a small missile—struck him a light blow on the back of the head.

Almost before it had dropped to the ground, he was on his feet. Nothing but the tall stems of the palms, and the thick underbrush behind them, was to be seen. There was not a breath of wind to stir the heavy, tropic leaves; the forest was silence and darkness.

The missile had not dropped from above—he was several yards beyond the limit of the forest—but had been thrown from behind, hitting him an inch or so from his left ear. He glanced down, and saw a ripe banana lying at his feet. That was the missile, and it was the first evidence he had had that there were bananas on the cay.

There are no inhabitants on these cays; no one but the Chinaman could have thrown the banana. There was no other explanation, unless Matthew believed in the legends which told that those cays were haunted by the ghosts of the buccaneers, who used to hide their booty in such places; and spiritual beings don't throw material bananas.

On the other hand, if the Chinaman meant harm, why had he not attacked Matthew with a boulder? A banana was not a weapon; it was a flag of truce, rather, and in itself not unwelcome. A friendly advance, then? Well, why not? The fellow understood that he must be brought to terms ere long, and was appealing for mercy betimes.

Upon this view of the incident, Matthew lifted his voice in a conciliatory tone.

"Hello, Chink! If you come right out and hand over that thing, I'll let you off; but if you wait until I catch you to-morrow, I'll everlastingly thrash you to pulp!"

The terms were plain, and the words were such as a Chinaman cook on a coasting schooner would be likely to have heard often in his career; but there was no response of any kind, not even another banana.

Matthew was very weary, and needed rest. If he didn't get some sleep soon, he might go crazy himself. It is not pleasant to lie down to sleep with a madman prowling about; but in a life of adventure one must accept chances. After some reflection, he got together some of the larger pieces of driftwood, and constructed a sort of shelter that would protect his head and the upper part of his body, in the event of the Chinaman selecting other weapons than bananas. Then, after another look around, and commending himself to Providence, he crawled under his fortification, heaped some dry sand over his legs for warmth, and knew no more till the sun awakened him next morning.

After getting up and going through a few scientific stretching movements, he began to feel something like himself again. The task for to-day was the exploration of the islet. His first discovery was something that looked like a part of a coat-tail hanging from the end of a broken branch of the cejiba. Apparently the Chinaman had managed to put on his Sunday garment before being carried off the *Señorita*, and when he leaped ashore last night he had left it behind him in his haste. Matthew would have been glad of the garment it came from for a night-dress; but a detached coat-tail on a desert island is of negligible value.

On second thought he divided the fragment into two parts, and with the aid of some tough, string-like lianas from the ceiba, and a padding of palm-leaf shreds, he built himself a pair of sandals. Walking unshod in the jungle and over boulders—much more running, should it come to that—would be unpleasant.

As he stood up, his eyes happened to fall on a growth of mahogany, a thicket of young sprouts densely clothed with green, just beyond the margin of the white sand. He saw the twigs gently parted to right and left, and in the aperture, stealthily peering forth at him, and somewhat obscured by the heavy shadow, the semblance of a hu-

man face, grotesquely ugly. As he stared at it, it slowly vanished.

No slightest sound accompanied the apparition. On the head there had seemed to be a dilapidated cocked hat, of the fashion of a century ago. Matthew leaped forward, and descried a deformed figure in a long, ragged coat or cloak, stealing swiftly but noiselessly away through the underbrush.

Matthew snatched up a knotted stick, to use as a club, and made after the fugitive with deadly intentions; but the underbrush was stiff, and much of it thorny, and the footing underneath was rough and treacherous. He couldn't get on fast, though the fleeing figure flitted away with strange ease and agility, its cloak fluttering behind it. Ever and anon, in the forest gloom, it turned a hideous visage back at him over a deformed shoulder. Matthew had had no idea either of the ugliness of the Chinaman or of his activity.

They were now near what seemed to be the central part of the forest—it was certainly the thickest. In scrambling over a big rock, one of the pursuer's sandals came off; and before he could recover it, the fugitive had vanished.

Matthew still went forward, but more slowly, and keeping a sharp lookout in all directions. He was covered with sweat and bleeding from scratches, and a sharp stone had made a painful cut in his foot. He limped along, winding in and out between the clumps and stumps, passed around a tall boulder, and suddenly came out upon the beach. He had crossed the cay.

It was not so easy to catch the Chinaman as he had anticipated. And what a queer-looking hobgoblin the fellow was—so repulsive of aspect, so preternaturally nimble, so noiseless! Any mind but a scientific one might have hinted at something supernatural—the ghost of some pirate haunting the scene of his crimes. Even Matthew was glad of the bright morning sunshine and the blue, dimpling sea.

He sat down on a piece of flat limestone and looked about him. There was an indentation in the coast-line at this point—two headlands running out to left and right, forming a convenient little harbor, opening toward the west; and Matthew made up his mind that this was a better site for his camp. The change was easily made, for he had no baggage to transfer; all he had to do was to stay where he was. Desert island life has its advantages!

He gazed off over the bay. Now, if a ship would only appear!

And lo, as if in an Arabian fairy tale, his wish was answered by the appearance of a craft of some sort from behind the headland to the right. It wasn't a ship, nor even a sloop or a catboat, but a small black bumboat, such as are used in these seas for fetching fruit and produce to and from trading vessels on the coast. Matthew had noticed one of them aboard the *Señorita Felicidad*.

Staring with all his eyes, Matthew saw that the boat had one occupant, who seemed to possess only one oar. With this he was rowing awkwardly, first on one side, then on the other, so that the little craft advanced in a zigzag, like a drunken man. The oarsman didn't seem to understand the science of paddling, and sat with his back to the shore.

On he came, deviously, but getting nearer. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and hatless. As he half turned his head, Matthew noticed that his face was fleshy and very red. Then he observed that there was a peculiar stiffness in the movements of his left shoulder. A moment later he struck his knee with his fist.

"By George!" he exclaimed.

The bumboat's nose slid up on the sand, the occupant feebly arose and stepped out. Matthew advanced to meet him.

"Hello, Boskom!" he said.

Boskom's first response was a sort of squeal, accompanied by an instinctive movement of his right hand toward his hip pocket. He didn't complete the movement, however, and stood for a moment tilting uncertainly backward and forward on his feet. His arms hung by his sides, and he inclined his head backward in order to look at Matthew from under his half-closed eyelids. It was now evident that his face was badly swollen and his eyes nearly closed by sunburn. In fact, Boskom was nearly all in.

Perceiving this, Matthew grew compassionate, and forgot that gesture toward the pocket. Here was a fellow creature who, like himself, had had a narrow escape from death, and who was in dire straits. Boskom's nose was still purple and black from the impact of Matthew's fist. He was probably famishing, and sorely in need of drink. Destiny, for reasons of its own, seemed resolved to have them work out their problems in company.

The resources of the islet as hospital and refectory were limited, but Matthew did what he could for the patient. Meanwhile Boskom's autobiography for the past thirty-six hours dribbled out in gasps and croaks. Its essential points were simple. He had crawled into the *Señorita's* bumboat for coolness on the night of the tornado, and before he could get out, he and the little craft were afloat by themselves. Till morning he had lain in the bottom of the boat, momentarily expecting annihilation. Upon the gale's subsiding, he took stock of his cargo, and found one oar and a tin dipper. With the latter he baled for some hours; the oar he left undisturbed, rowing not being among his accomplishments, and he not knowing in which direction to row. About noon, a small flying-fish, hotly pursued by a porpoise, dropped into the boat; and upon it, in its raw state, Boskom had breakfasted, lunched, and dined. At sunrise of the present morning he had sighted the cay, and from that moment had been practising himself in the science of navigation. His monocle had been lost.

"And well startled and 'eartily glad I was to 'ear your voice at landing, sir," he remarked—or mumbled, rather, through swollen lips. "I mightn't 'ave recognized you, first off, by your looks, you being a bit dishabilled, as one might say."

"I noticed you thought of shooting me," Matthew said, pointing to the hip pocket. "Is the gun in good working order after its wetting?"

Boskom was greatly embarrassed.

"Now, Mr. Madison, sir—"

"Don't waste time apologizing! We have more important matters to think of. Drinking water is what we most need; so let us hunt for a spring."

"Water—ah!" said Boskom. "If I'd never drunk nothing but water, sir, I'd not 'ave been 'ere this day! I'm most grateful to you for your 'umanity, Mr. Madison. As for me injuring you, sir—in my right senses, never! I'm more likely to kiss your boots."

Matthew laughed.

"You'd have to find the *Señorita* first. Well, I shall try for a fire, to begin with—if I can find the right sort of wood."

Boskom had been hunting in his pockets. Uttering a crow of satisfaction, he produced a small nickel case containing an oiled wick and an ignitable substance operated by a

spring. Upon trial, Matthew found it possible to set fire to a bit of tinder, from which a driftwood fire was soon blazing. The two men then set to work to collect shell-fish, and presently there was an odor as of broiled oysters.

While Boskom, who seemed to have a gift for culinary matters, was busy with these, Matthew went exploring in the vicinity, and almost immediately discovered a spring, flowing out on the border of the wood. He was interested to notice that a basin had been formed around it with flat stones carefully placed, evidently by human hands. He called to Boskom.

"We're not the first here," he remarked.

"No more we are," returned Boskom, examining the rude structure eagerly. "And them stones weren't put there yesterday, neither. If I was asked my opinion, I'd come near sayin' this is the work o' them 'ere buccaneers—the pirates of the Spanish Main, sir!"

"Perhaps, but what of it?" said Matthew indifferently.

Boskom peered cunningly in his face, and made a motion as of counting coins from one hand into the other. Matthew was amused.

"Have you really got that maggot in your brain of buried treasure?"

Boskom looked down, and seemed to commune with himself.

"Look here, Mr. Madison," he said at length, in a serious tone. "Let's talk man to man, and cards on the table. I've been on your trail some while back. That yarn about Nobleman Jack ain't so private as you seem to think. It looks like we both got pitched on to this cay accidental; but anyhow, here we both be. 'Luck seeks its man,' is an old sayin'. There's been pirates here, and there may be diamonds and rubies as well—all that those Seaton friends of yours had, and more! Treasure-trove, Mr. Madison, an' findin's is havin's, and fifty-fifty is fair division! Shall we call it a bargain?"

"There seems to be a spell on this place that turns people crazy," said Matthew, laughing. "The Chinaman cook got it first, and now you have it. My turn may come next! But while I'm sane, I'll say it 'll be time enough to talk about division when we find something better than mus-sels and bananas to divide."

"What was that about Chinaman cook?" inquired Boskom, blinking.

"He's around here somewhere. He came ashore with me on a big tree, and got away in the dark before I could catch him; but I'll get him yet!"

"The Chinaman cook, last I saw of 'im, an' that was maybe twenty minutes before the wind hit us, was dead drunk on the floor of the fo'cas'le, an' I shut the transom when I come up to get in the bumboat. I'll lay you what you like that he's there yet, an' the niggers with him. If you saw him, you saw—"

Boskom wagged his head ominously.

"I took it to be the Chinaman, but it may have been one of the others," said Matthew carelessly. "He's a lunatic, whoever he is. You'd better watch out for him at night. He's more like a spook than a man." Matthew thought it as well to arouse Boskom's superstitious emotions, for Mayda's locket must not be desecrated by his hands. "Our breakfast will be getting cold," he went on, walking toward the fire, fifty yards down the beach.

Half-way, he stopped; then ran forward. The fire had been knocked to pieces. The shells of several of the cooked bivalves lay about empty, and the others had been scattered here and there. The spook had raided their meal!

Boskom came up. He stood staring, speechless.

A throaty chuckle came from within the border of the wood. The men wheeled about, and Matthew thought he caught a glimpse of a crooked figure, with a hat-brim slouched over its face, grinning out at him. It withdrew promptly.

He gave chase, Boskom lumbering after. Briers, sharp sticks, pointed stones, thickets, rotten boles of fallen trees impeded him; but his blood was up, and he would have kept on over hot plowshares. The battle zest possessed him.

Hither and thither they went, doubling, dodging. Ever and anon a ghastly visage turned back at Matthew over a deformed shoulder. It was exciting work. The groans and gasps of Boskom sounded in the distance.

Again the chase led to the densest part of the wood, and again the quarry suddenly disappeared; but Matthew was not to be foiled. Panting hard, he pushed forward, put aside the tough stems of a clump of bamboos, and found himself in an open space, about four paces in diameter. In the center, three tall slabs of limestone

stood together, and in the area they enclosed was a large rounded boulder. The whole formed a sort of chair. One might pass close by it a hundred times and fail to see it. Matthew saw it now, and he saw something else.

Seated in the chair was the figure of a man, with the head bowed forward, holding something on its knees. It sat motionless, as if in profound meditation, or in sleep. There was no hat on the head, but rusty masses of dark hair hung about the countenance. Matthew stepped closer, and then recoiled in horror. Was this what he had pursued?

The face was that of a skull. The hands were skeleton hands, the yellow skin dried upon them. The figure was the skeleton of a man who had been dead for many years.

Matthew was quick, and had a cool head; but before he could gather his wits sufficiently to recognize that some further development must be at hand, it announced itself. From behind the slab at the back appeared the apparition in the cocked hat and tattered cloak—grisly spoils doubtless filched from the dead buccaneer. It reached out, chattering, caught up from the lap of the figure an oblong object a span and a half in length, and sent it flying straight at Matthew.

The missile was heavy and sharp-cornered, but Matthew caught it with instinctive address. As he did so, the creature that had hurled it made a spring upward, caught the limb of a tree that projected above, and pulled itself swiftly out of sight amid the foliage.

"Damned if it ain't my old hape!" croaked a voice from behind—for Boskom had arrived.

"You'd better catch him," Matthew replied. "You said he was worth a thousand dollars. When you've got him you may keep him—I won't ask for fifty-fifty!"

"He can wait. What you got there, if I may make so bold?"

In the flurry of the moment Matthew had forgotten something. He dropped the box, seized Boskom by the shoulder, and began to drag him in the direction which the "edicated" chimpanzee seemed to have taken.

"I'm a fool!" he growled. "He's got it on him! Come on! If you know him, he knows you and will come to you. Boskom, I'll give you a thousand dollars in gold, the day we get out of this, and the ape into

the bargain, if you catch him, and I get it back! Hurry, man! It'll be sunset again in six hours!"

"What's the market vally of this 'ere thing he's got on him?" panted Boskom, as a thorn-bush ripped his trousers from the knee to the hip.

"Value? A pawnbroker would give you three dollars on it. If you'd rather wait and ask him, all the better for me! I want it—that's its value!"

Boskom was too breathless to inquire further at that time, and Matthew had no inclination to tell him about the locket. He was convinced that the ape was wearing it round its neck, and his blood boiled with exasperation at the thought.

Several hours later the two men returned to the scattered embers of their breakfast fire; but the chimpanzee was not of their company. Having tasted freedom, he was not yet ready to accept the yoke of civilization. Several times during the chase he had revealed himself to the hunters, and had evidently recognized Boskom, but had only grinned and disappeared in response to the latter's entreaties.

On one occasion Matthew fancied that he had caught the gleam of gold on the animal's breast, and so far forgot his usual humanity as to suggest to Boskom to shoot it; but whatever Boskom's tenderness of heart, his sense of values kept his finger from the trigger. Moreover, the old-fashioned six-shooter, the existence of which he had coyly admitted after it could no longer be denied, though efficient enough in the hands of an expert, would have been an untrustworthy weapon for a person in the shaky condition to which Boskom's unwonted exertions had reduced him; nor would he by any means consent to Matthew's making trial of it.

"'E'll be comin' round after 'e's 'ad 'is little fling," he said. "Me an' the Nobleman is good old pals. We've no call to 'urry 'im."

They proceeded to collect and cook supper. A feast shared promotes sociability.

"We may have to spend the rest of our lives here," said Matthew, spearing a boiled mussel with a pointed stick, "and it would clear the air if you told me what you really are and why you were spying on me in Jamaica. What had Anderson's Circus to do with it?"

"My temp'rament is romantic and harristic, Mr. Madison. I've read the po'ts,

an' I've worn the buskin on the applause stage, sir. Some years back I became hinterested in the lit'ratoor of the buccaneers. Millions of treasure them fellers won, sir, an' what became of it? There weren't no pawnbrokers in these seas; so they buried it, of course, till they'd be ready to come hup north or hover to Europe an' spend it. Then, first thing they know, they gets 'anged or sliced up with cutlases; but the treasure stays buried—mind that! I'll heat my 'at if I don't think some of it's on this same cay we're sittin' on. So, 'earin' that talk o' yours about Nobleman Jack and the jew'ls, I draws my hinf'rences. I camps on your trail, an' destiny, knowin' her man, brings us 'ere together through storm an' flood. If that old toff in the woods over yonder ain't the nobleman 'imself, 'e's one o' that sort, an' the treasure won't be far off. What was that the hape pitched at you?"

Matthew laughed.

"I'm sure I don't know—a bit of quartz, I fancy. I was thinking of something else. You should write a book, Boskom! 'The Veracious Memoirs of Phineas Boskom' would make a hit."

"'Appen it might—at least with some folks," said Boskom thoughtfully.

Supper over, and no dishes to wash or tobacco to smoke, they built up the fire and made themselves as comfortable as they could for the night. Boskom lay on his back and was soon snoring. Matthew, after lying awake for a time, dropped into a light slumber.

Presently he awoke and sat up. Boskom still snored. Matthew laid a few sticks on the fire, and was about to lie down again, when a random thought caused him to change his mind. He rose quietly to his feet and went off into the wood.

There was no wind, and the forest was still. The moon was full, and stood in the zenith overhead.

VII

WHETHER suggested by a dream, or by other circumstances, Matthew's purpose was to revisit the scene of his late encounter with the chimpanzee. There was an obscure point which he wished to clear up. It would probably amount to nothing, but, as it had got into his head, he would sleep the sounder for having it settled.

He had a good natural sense of direction, and he found it easier than he had expect-

ed to make his way through the forest. It was not long before he came in sight of the clump of bamboo; and there, in his ancient stone seat, sat the mysterious presence, its vacant skull bent over its skeleton knees. Nobleman Jack, perhaps—it might be so! After the disastrous sea-fight, the old free-booter might have escaped to this islet; and if one assumed as much as that, why mightn't he have contrived to bring some of his plunder with him?

What was the oblong object that the ape had hurled at his pursuer? Matthew had taken it for granted, as he told Boskom, that it was a fragment of rock; but Boskom's inquiries had led to a reconsideration of the matter. Why should a moribund pirate encumber himself with a piece of quartz? And the fragment had seemed remarkably symmetrical for a product of unassisted nature.

Then, too, Matthew thought he recalled that when the missile settled in his hands there had come from it a sort of chinking noise, as if it were not a solid mass, but a receptacle, with something in it. He had probably undertaken a wild-goose chase, but if the notion kept one awake, why not see it through?

The ape had thrown the thing over the right shoulder of the skeleton, and Matthew was standing just here when he caught it. Before he had got over his surprise, Boskom had turned up. He had then realized that the ape was escaping with the locket, had thrown down the object, and had given chase. The object, then, ought to be *there*, said Matthew to himself, pointing; and he looked, and there it was!

He picked it up with the satisfaction of a reasoning mind proving the correctness of its rational processes. He had been right, too, about its symmetrical form. He shook it. It gave out a chinking noise—right, a third time!

With a sigh of content and curiosity, he squatted down in front of the skeleton, on the moss and ferns, and set out to give his find a thorough, scientific examination. The moonlight, falling straight down from overhead, cast an excellent light upon the object of his investigation.

It was made of some sort of metal, tarnished by weather, of a grayish hue—lead, probably. To determine this, he scratched it with a bit of quartz. It was not lead, nor yet pewter, but a nobler substance—silver! It was a silver box, about fifteen

inches long by seven in width and five in height. It was carved all over with figures in relief—dragons and goblins, lotus-flowers and mystical emblems. On the lid squatted, with legs crossed—just as Matthew was squatting—and with an oriental leer on his face, a figure of Buddha!

Matthew slowly lowered the box to his crossed shins and stared up at the face of the skeleton. These were plain facts—no imagination or miracle whatever. The box was the famous Seaton treasure-box, precisely as Mayda had described it. How true she was, even in regard to matters of hearsay a hundred years old!

To judge from the noise when it was shaken, it still contained the matchless Seaton jewels, to the value of one hundred thousand pounds, or more! Half a million dollars would no doubt be very acceptable to dear old Devereux Seaton in his present straits, even if his daughter was about to marry Jeff Morton, who was worth several millions. Matthew would present the jewels to Mayda as his wedding-gift—provided, of course, that Providence, which had so wonderfully favored him thus far, extended its benignity far enough to fetch him back to Mona.

Now for a look at the jewels themselves! Diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires—ah, yes, sapphires!—how fine they would look, flashing back the soft splendors of the moon!

"Thanks to you, old sinner!" said Matthew, apostrophizing the unimpassioned mummy on his limestone throne. "You took good care of them, and now you make me your deputy for restoring them. May it take something off your pains and penalties in purgatory!"

He sought for the lock. It was there—quite a peculiar one, of Japanese or Chinese design, no doubt; not such a lock as Matthew had ever seen before. It didn't seem to have been injured by its long seclusion; but where was the key? Matthew searched for it, but after ten or fifteen minutes of earnest investigation it was nowhere to be found; and without it, nothing short of knocking the box to pieces would reveal its contents. Matthew would by no means proceed to such extremities with other people's property—with Mayda's property, indeed!

And after all, supposing he had the key, what right would he have to use it? The box must stay locked till Mayda herself

opened it, in whatever manner she might please. Having come to this conclusion, Matthew rose up, with the box under his arm, and confronted the muzzle of Boskom's revolver, with Boskom behind it.

"'Ands hup!" said Boskom.

"That's idiotic!" said Matthew, with irritation. "Can a naked man have concealed weapons on his person? Put down that gun! It might go off."

"Fifty-fifty's the best I'll let you off on," returned Boskom.

Matthew discerned a lack of firmness in the little fat man's tones. All the same, there was some risk.

"Is this box what you're interested in?" he inquired, holding it up.

"Makin' jokes won't do, Mr. Madison," Boskom rejoined, looking as much like a pirate as he knew how. "Keep your distance, sir, and put the box on the ground at your feet. Then retire three paces. You can't bluff me—I'm an old hand! I've killed better men than you—stacks of 'em. If you delay, it won't be fifty-fifty—I'll take it hall! 'Urry, please!"

Matthew eyed him for a moment, and smiled.

"Your mind functions badly, Boskom," he said. "Hold-ups may be pulled off in a New York slum, but not by one castaway to another on a Caribbean cay. We're badly enough off as it is; you would be worse off with me murdered. You couldn't realize on the box till you got back home, and then you'd have to explain to the persons who rescued you—if you ever were rescued, which is unlikely—how my murder came about. With your previous record of assassinations, that mightn't be easy. A man with his portrait in the Rogues' Gallery is at a disadvantage!"

Boskom flinched at the mention of the Rogues' Gallery. Observing this, Matthew, who had hitherto spoken in an easy, bantering tone, frowned fiercely, stepped forward, and with a "Give me that!" wrenched the revolver from his hand.

Boskom turned to flee, but was brought up by the bamboo hedge.

"You wouldn't shoot an 'elpless man, Mr. Madison?" he quavered.

"I shall think it over; but it would be easier burying you in the sand of the beach than here, so march in that direction! How did you get here? I left you snoring."

"I was woke up by the hape chuckin' clam-shells at me, sir, playful like. Likely,

when you went off, he plucked up courage. When I see you was gone, I followed him, and he led me 'ere. I was only jokin' with the gun, sir. I like my little joke; but I wouldn't kill a rabbit, an' never did!"

"Did you ever see a cur killed, Boskom? That sometimes happens when they carry their little jokes too far! How near did the ape come to you?"

"It might be a dozen yards, sir. 'E's a bit shy yet."

"Keep moving!" admonished Matthew.

There was silence for a while. It seemed evident that if the chimpanzee were wearing the missing locket, Boskom had not observed it.

"Make it your business to overcome the ape's shyness. Whether I let you live may depend on your success," Madison said finally. "There's a private matter to be settled between him and me. You will make your camp a hundred paces from me on the beach; and mind you keep the fire going! Be up early, and have the breakfast cooked. If you attempt to approach me till I'm ready, you get a bullet. Move along!"

For the scion of a noble English family, Boskom obeyed orders and adopted a menial attitude with remarkable readiness.

"Yes, sir! Quite so, sir! As you please, sir! Your 'umble servant, sir!" was his language.

He sought to ingratiate himself with almost tearful assiduity, and withal appeared to find a certain pleasure in this new relationship, such as one experiences in fondly revisiting the scenes of an earlier and happier period. Matthew, immersed in his own thoughts, paid little attention to him.

The bumboat was drawn up on the beach, and had proved itself capable of weathering a gale. None of the cays between Jamaica and Honduras was more than three hundred miles from one or the other; unless rescue came speedily, he must hazard the adventure. But first the locket! He would not leave the islet without that!

Upon this decision, the warder and his prisoner came out upon the beach, the time, by the stars, being near two o'clock in the morning. It was long enough before sunrise to make a nap worth while; and Matthew, after seeing Boskom properly disposed of, made a wallow for himself in the sand, placed the silver treasure-box and the revolver underneath a mattress of palm-leaves, and lay down upon it.

He knew no more until he was aroused by excited cries from Boskom. He started up. The sun was just above the horizon.

"Have you got that ape?"

"Not just in 'and, sir; but 'e'll be all right, sir. It was 'im woke me, sir. 'E was the first to see it, sir!"

"See what?"

"Yonder, roundin' into the bay, sir! Look for yourself!" crowed Boskom, pointing out over the water and dancing about grotesquely.

Matthew looked, and beheld a schooner yacht, with fair white sails and the pennant of the New York Yacht Club, standing outside the headlands, about half a mile from shore. She came up in the light breeze, and a four-oared boat was lowered and manned, and began to pull toward the beach.

"It was our smoke brought 'em!" Boskom declared joyously. "I kept the fire goin' all night, sir. Shall I serve you your breakfast now, sir?"

"I wish you'd get me a pair of trousers and a clean shirt," said Matthew, with a nervous glance at his legs.

"I'd hoffer you mine gladly, sir, but you look better without 'em than what I would," Boskom said. "If I'd legs like yours, Mr. Madison, I'd return to the stage. There'd be money in it. Classic rôles, sir—'Amlet an' Romeo!"

"See if you can't collect that ape!" said Matthew, as the boat drew nearer. "We don't leave here till I've had an interview with him."

"You wouldn't be leavin' without me, would you, sir?" asked Boskom anxiously.

"Do as I tell you!" answered the young man sternly; and the other scuttled off.

The boat pulled in.

"Stern all!" cried the man at the helm—a handsome young chap in white duck, with a vizored cap.

To Matthew the voice had a familiar sound. The rowers shipped their oars; the helmsman stood up, and, stepping from one thwart to another, sprang to the beach. As he advanced upon Matthew, his searching expression gave place to a broad smile.

"Matt, you remind me of the float at the boat-houses, just before we took the eight-oar out," he said cheerfully. "Your muscle above the equator is a bit off, but your legs seem good still. How are you?"

They shook hands.

"Jack, you've put on flesh since you

handled the rudder-lines in that Yale race!"

"Matt, old boy, here we are again!"

"Jack, you were always Johnny-on-the-spot!"

But our national stoicism has its limits. After this initial piece of bravado, the two young fellows had to weaken. Matthew's voice broke, and his face quivered. Both of them began to gulp, whimper, and giggle; they hugged each other like wrestlers and thumped each other violently on the back.

"A fellow gets weak," Matthew explained. "I've not had much grub, and—"

"Of course!" said Jefferson Morton.

"I came away without breakfast myself!"

They looked at each other affectionately but shamefacedly.

"But you have company," Morton remarked. "Who's the stout party that waddled off? Your man Friday?"

"Boskom, he calls himself. I sent him for the chimpanzee."

"Three of you? A family party! Any others?"

"Nobleman Jack, up in the woods; but he's a skeleton!"

"A skeleton nobleman! I say, is paresis catching on these cays? Do I look sane still? I had a queer feeling as I came ashore!"

"I want a pair of trousers. You have ladies aboard, I suppose?"

"Foreseeing your predicament, I fetched over a suit of mine for you. Tom, that bundle!"

The brawny young mariner thus addressed brought the package. Matthew wore a dubious expression; there was a discrepancy of some five inches between his friend and himself.

"They're too civilized for a buccaneer, but you can get a slop suit in Kingston," Jeff Morton remarked, as the other unfolded the finely tailored garments. "By the way, is there any treasure to be dug up here?"

"About half a million dollars' worth in my bed there, I believe." Matthew seated himself on a stone and began to try to force a leg into the immaculate pantaloons. Jeff stepped over to the open-air bedchamber and kicked aside the palm-leaves.

"Hello! You did capture something, after all!" he exclaimed. "The original leaden casket from the 'Merchant of Venice,' and—what? A lethal weapon from

'Treasure Island'? In connection with the skeleton, the fat valet, and the chimpanzee, this has a sinister look! What have you been up to, boy?"

Matthew was struggling sternly with the eleemosynary attire.

"What induced you to be such a spindle-shanked sawed-off, Jack?" he cried in exasperation. "If I ever got these on, they'd never come off. I should have to die in 'em!"

"Don't be so precipitate, Matt! When we get aboard the Capable Kate, you can change to pajamas; our folks won't mind. But tell me about the box with the lizards carved on it and the little cutie sitting on top. What's inside it?"

"I haven't opened it. It belongs to the Seatons, and I was on my way to them with it."

"You haven't got far to go, then, for I've got 'em on the yacht. And the steward was just sounding the first bell for breakfast when we sighted your smoke. It was a good job, our rounding you up so soon; I'd made up my mind for a month's cruise at least. We made Kingston only a few hours after you left. When that squall came, the old gentleman got anxious about that tub you were in, and I couldn't do less than offer to hunt up your remains. Fortune favors the unselfish, and this is our first port of call."

"The Seatons are on board?"

"They are; and by the way, I want to introduce you to my wife."

There was a pause. Matthew gave a violent pull to the trousers, and they parted in a most inopportune place.

"I won't be able to join you, Jack," he said gloomily. "You can have a suit of man's-size clothes sent over here from Kingston, when you get back. I sha'n't mind staying here a few days more. Yes, I heard you were engaged, but—so you're married already! Best congratulations! Pretty quick work, wasn't it?"

"None too quick for me! You must ask Mrs. Morton for her view of it. She seemed fairly contented when I last saw her, an hour ago. She wants to meet you."

"I have had the pleasure of meeting her already," said Matthew, rather stiffly.

"Oh, I was under the impression—Look here, Matt, did you seriously think you'd be allowed to continue the *Robinson Crusoe* stunt on account of a pair of breeches? Here, Tom!" He beckoned to the broad-

shouldered young giant in waiting. "Do you and Ned get back to the ship and bring out your holiday rig for this gentleman. Tell the folks to go on with breakfast—we'll be along presently. They were my best duds, too!" he added, ruefully contemplating the wreck of his attire. "You were always passionate and headstrong! Hey, here comes your valet with the ape! What a beauty!"

Boskom was approaching down the beach, leading the chimpanzee, now denuded of its borrowed raiment, and hobbling along with symptoms of reluctance. Its captor seemed to be conducting it by a cord tied round its neck.

"My duty to you, gentlemen," he panted, looking quite fagged out. "You'd never believe the time I've 'ad gettin' hold of 'im, sir. Lucky 'e 'ad this bit o' string on him, to fetch 'im along by—and there's a bauble on it, looks like gold, but—"

To everybody's surprise, Matthew gave vent to a guttural cry and sprang at the chimpanzee. The latter, not only surprised, but alarmed, pulled back on his halter, which, being but a silken cord, gave way. The animal made off into the woods at a great pace, and Boskom, who had been pulling in the opposite direction, went over on his back. Matthew pounced upon him like a tiger. There was an obscure and incomprehensible mix-up, and then Matthew arose triumphant, with some object clutched tight in his hand. Boskom, livid with fright, remained sitting on the beach.

"What the mischief is all this about?" exclaimed Morton, laughing at the absurdity of the spectacle, yet disturbed by the suspicion that there must really be something wrong with his friend's mental equilibrium.

Matthew made no reply, but inwardly longed for a pocket in which he might secrete precious articles. Morton's eyes fell upon Boskom. He looked more attentively. Boskom blinked back unresponsive.

"Upon my word, if it isn't old Ferguson, at last!" he cried. "What did you do with the family spoons and forks, Ferg? You old scamp, you! Have you got that charge of buckshot in your left deltoid muscle that I pumped into you by inadvertence when I was a small boy and you were the model of English butlers? Well, the detectives will be waiting at the pier, Ferg, when we make New York, and you'll get a chance to rest up!"

The person thus addressed had not at first recognized in the grown man with a troubadour mustache and a gold-braided yachting-cap the fifteen-year-old boy whom he had known as the son of his employer and the plague of his life. But recognition came; and he had neither spirits nor, indeed, material facts with which to meet the situation.

"Ain't I suffered enough?" was his only reply; and, sitting with his elbows on his knees, he allowed his sinful countenance to sink into his hands.

"This is surely the Port of Strange Encounters!" said Morton, turning to Matthew. "Are any more coming?"

"Not so far as I'm concerned, unless your man brings back something that I can get into decently. I've suffered enough, too!"

"What about a hot breakfast—chopped grapefruit, soft-boiled eggs, tenderloin steak, crisp fried potatoes, smoking hot coffee, strong enough to stand your spoon up in, and the best cigar made in Cuba? We have some of the old gentleman's genuine Vuelta Abajos, and you never tasted anything to compare with 'em. Even my wife, who is very fastidious, asks me to blow the aroma over her way when I'm smoking 'em."

Matthew's jaws ached. Ferguson — if that was his name — uttered a lamentable groan, and rolled over prone on the sand. But the passing reference to Morton's wife had caused an ache not in Matthew's salivary glands only, but in a more noble organ.

"I'd really rather not come, old man," he said, with a pallid look. "I'm on a mission for the Smithsonian, you know—not in the mood for society, and—"

The boat returned. Tom jumped out, with the holiday rig neatly folded on his arm, and presented them to the naked naturalist with a grave bow.

"Human moods are ruled by dress," said Morton. "Now, let's see—first the shirt!"

The fine white flannel, with the low rolled collar and the front emblazoned with "Capable Kate," descended over Matthew's head, and the cuffs covered his hands to the finger-ends.

"Breeches next!"

On being pulled up, they proved to be rather tight across the chest and redundant about the feet, but—

"You never looked half so well," Morton declared. "My wife will fall in love

with you. You must let Tom's tailor dress you in future. All aboard, now! Wake up, Ferg! I'll appoint you assistant steward for the trip, but don't make any mistakes with the ship's silver!"

"That chimpanzee!" muttered Matthew, hesitating. "And the skeleton—oughtn't it to be buried?"

"Leave Nobleman Jack to his meditations! As for the chimpanzee, he knows when he's well off. You have the casket? Do you want the gun?"

"It has served its purpose," said Matthew, and tossed it far out into the azure of the bay, where it fell with a farewell plop.

He and Morton took their seats in the stern, and the crew handled the oars.

"If you please, sir, there's Nobleman Jack now!" came from the exposed male-factor in the bows.

They looked over their shoulders.

"Your eyesight must be failing, Ferg; it's the chimpanzee," said Morton.

"It's all the same," said Matthew.

"Oh, a case of metempsychosis!"

"Ah, 'im an' me was true friends! 'E's a bidding me good-by!" groaned the former butler sentimentally.

"Mind your head!" called out Matthew.

The ape had a coconut in his hand, and on reaching the margin of the beach he hurled it after the boat. His aim was true; and as ball-playing had not been among Ferg's accomplishments, it hit him fair on the forehead and knocked him flat in the bottom of the boat, where he remained during the rest of the trip. The ape showed his teeth, dropped to all fours, and cantered back into the forest.

In a few minutes they were close aboard the Capable Kate. The passengers were waving greetings at the rail. Now for the meeting with Mayda—Mrs. Morton! Matthew had his locket safe in the pocket of Tom's trousers; the silver box was on his knees.

"They waited breakfast, after all," observed Jeff Morton as he laid the boat by the gangplank. "Hurrah, folks! We got him!" he called up to the others.

Matthew didn't look up. Jeff preceded him up the ladder. His own progress was embarrassed by the box in his arms and by the superfluous inches of the trousers, on which he trod at every step. On deck at last, he gave a hurried glance at the group. Mayda stood at the left, and at that mo-

ment she had crossed her hands over her breast. Matthew was not conscious of distinguishing any one else; yet he was quick-eyed enough to notice that the sapphire ring was no longer on the third finger of Mayda's left hand. There was no other ring, either.

Meanwhile Jeff Morton was stepping forward with a grand air, leading by the hand a very pretty and smiling young lady, upon whom Matthew looked vacantly.

"Elaine," said Jeff, "I present to you my old friend Matthew Madison, who dressed on purpose to meet you! He would have been my best man, but the Smithsonian saw him first. To make up for it, Matt, you may kiss her—just once. She's that most fortunate of her sex—Mrs. Jefferson Morton!"

Mrs. Jefferson Morton arched her delicate dark eyebrows, and her cheeks pinked most becomingly.

Matthew's conduct on this occasion was peculiar.

His eyes dwelt upon the charming young lady in a prolonged and fascinated stare, like that of a small boy observing, for the first time, a camel passing through the eye of a needle. He then stopped and set down on the deck the silver treasure-box. Straightening up again, he gave a hitch to his waistband, till it nearly reached his armpits, and advanced a pace upon Mrs. Jefferson Morton.

Before she could recoil, or be protected by her husband, he had enclosed her in his arms, poised himself above her, so to speak, and then swooped down upon her with a kiss, a smack, a buss such as an eighteenth-century fox-hunting British squire is reported to have been wont to bestow upon a pretty barmaid. Finally he released her to her speechless husband, smiled inanely, and shook hands cordially and quite normally with Mr. and Mrs. Seaton. He came to Mayda last, and said, as he took her hand:

"It wasn't the end, after all!"

VIII

AFTER breakfast was over—during which meal Matthew had entertained his friends with an account of his adventures up to the period of his second visit, by moonlight, to the lair of the dead buccaneer—he reached under the table and brought up the silver box, which he placed ceremoniously in front of Mayda.

"I believe this answers the description of your property," he said. "I couldn't find the key; but perhaps you have a spell to open it!"

Hereupon ensued much interest and excitement. Everybody leaned forward to examine the famous work of art. Mr. Seaton pronounced it to be, beyond question, the identical object stolen by the Baron Johannes Lassalles de Ferronovo, otherwise Nobleman Jack.

"These things are never duplicated," he said. "As for a key," he added, "I never knew of one. If you possess a spell, my dear"—to Mayda—"now is the time to put it forth!"

The good old gentleman was quite exhilarated, in view of this sudden restoration of the ancient Seaton splendor and solvency.

They all looked expectantly at Mayda, who, throughout, had appeared to be the least interested member of the party.

"If I have a spell, I've never known it," said she, her silken fingers wandering over the box. "There seems to be no keyhole; perhaps it opens in some occult way. This little deity on the lid looks as if he had the secret."

"A woman can twist a man around her little finger," Morton observed, glancing at his wife; "why not a deity?"

Mayda, with an impulsive twitch of her head, did something, none could say just what. The deity gave a little jump, there was a click, and the lid of the box stood ajar. The long hidden treasure was about to be revealed.

"I knew she could do it!" said Matthew, delighted.

"Half a million dollars, wasn't it?" asked Morton.

"At present prices they would be worth a good deal more," said Seaton, his aristocratic old visage flushing a little with agreeable anticipation.

"I bid seven hundred and fifty thousand for the whole lot, before looking!" cried Morton, throwing up his hand.

"A million, gold!" Matthew threw in composedly.

"You take it!" rejoined the other, biting off the end of a cigar.

"I don't know that we care to sell," said Mayda coolly.

She lifted the lid. Everybody craned forward to have a glimpse of the jewels. Mrs. Seaton upset her coffee-cup. There

was silence; then a general shout. The box was full of pebbles!

"Sold for a million, all the same!" laughed Morton.

"I refused to sell!" corrected Mayda, with a flash of her eyes.

"If they were mine, I wouldn't sell them again for twice a million," said Matthew, frowning.

"What happened, do you suppose?" inquired Mrs. Seaton.

"Fancy Nobleman Jack playing such a mean trick on us!" said Mrs. Morton.

"I suspect the trick was played on him," surmised Matthew, after pondering the matter for a while. "My notion is," he went on, as the others looked at him in surprise, "that some of his officers found out what the box contained, contrived to take the jewels out and substitute pebbles, and when the fight, or mutiny, or whatever it was, took place, they allowed Nobleman Jack to get away with what he supposed to be his booty. He didn't discover the deception till he got to his island. It probably broke his heart, or he may have killed himself; and there he has sat ever since!"

"How terribly tragic and romantic! I'm almost sorry for him," sighed Mrs. Morton.

"His sin found him out!" said Devereux Seaton, with pardonable severity.

"Maybe it was the chimpanzee got 'em, after all," Morton conjectured. "If there's any truth in metempsychosis, what else could you expect? Shall we go back and look?"

"I was reading Emerson last night," returned Mayda, closing the box. "'Set not your foot on graves,' he says."

Matthew gave her a look, but held his peace.

"Well, then," suggested Morton, rising, "suppose we go on deck?"

And up they all went, except that Mayda delayed a minute to leave the box in her room.

The Capable Kate, under a steady breeze, was putting her pretty foot foremost, and the islet of the mysterious presence was becoming a mere tuft of palms in the distance. The company gathered themselves under the awning aft and discussed the events of the morning.

Morton also gave passages from the earlier career of the person who was then called Ferguson. It appeared that after serving as the family butler, impeccable and dignified—except to Jeff, for to the

boy of a family no butler is a hero—he decamped with the silver and other valuables, and had never been apprehended, though it was ascertained that he already had a criminal record behind him, and in spite of the fact that Jeff had marked him with a charge of buckshot while loading his gun in the pantry.

"He was a talented old fraud," admitted the narrator. "He used to spout near-extracts from the poets, and he told me he used to be a famous tragic actor in dear old Hengland; but I always knew he was a humbug, and now he's leading man in a tragicomedy of real life. However, if he manages to slip away when I'm not looking, between this and New York, I won't get myself out of breath chasing him. Our silver is gone, like your family jewels, Mr. Seaton; and after the first ten minutes, I'm not revengeful."

"It is annoying, nevertheless," the old gentleman stated sadly.

"We have the box, though," said Mrs. Seaton philosophically.

"How did the chimpanzee get on the ceiba?" Mrs. Morton wished to know.

"He and I were probably born under the same star," replied Matthew. "I'm glad the beast didn't happen to be a tiger, though a tiger couldn't have stolen—" He stopped, and his eyes sought Mayda, who sat a little apart, watching the porpoises over the side. He had his hand in Tom's trouser-pocket, and the locket in his hand. "The rest of Anderson's Arabian Menagerie didn't jump in time as the ceiba went by, I suppose. The tramp steamer and the Señorita must have drifted close together when the gale struck us."

"Mustn't it have been horrible?" cried Mrs. Morton. "Do hurry and get us back to Kingston before another of those tornadoes catches us, Jeff!"

"I'd like to have been in that one!" said Mayda.

She got up languidly as she spoke, and went below.

"Mayda has seemed out of sorts the last few days," remarked her mother.

"Probably she's in love," suggested Jeff.

"She ought to be," declared her father.

"She's not a bad-looking girl, if I do say it; but she doesn't seem to become seriously interested in persons of my sex."

Matthew cleared his throat and tilted his hat-brim over his eyes, though he wasn't facing the sun.

"Has she never been engaged?" he inquired casually.

"Dear me, no!" answered Mrs. Seaton.

"We met a number of very agreeable gentlemen up in New York on this last visit; but Mayda was more interested in the picture-galleries and the music."

"I wish we had known you were there!" said Matthew.

"Where were you staying?"

"With an old college chum of Mayda's—Madge Trelawney. You never saw two girls so devoted to each other. Madge is a brunette, you know. Girls sometimes form those extravagant attachments. Mayda told me that in college they would wear each other's ornaments, and even exchange frocks."

"Men are a good deal that way, too," said Jeff. "Matt wanted to wear my trousers this morning; but they were too stylish for him, fresh as he was from a life of savagery!"

Mrs. Seaton smiled amiably.

"Madge is to be married next spring," she continued; "and of course she had a great deal to tell Mayda about her fiancé. He's a Mr. Parker—very good family, I believe, and quite well off. He'd given her a beautiful engagement ring—a sapphire; and actually, when we came away, Madge insisted on Mayda's wearing the ring for a month to bring her good luck. She said Mayda always brought good luck, and Mr. Parker was up in Canada on business, and she was afraid something might happen to him. I believe Mayda sent it back just before we started on this trip; she thought it might get mislaid. I don't know what Mr. Parker would have thought of such a thing!"

"Of course, if he'd met Mayda with the ring, he'd have married her. Any decent man would feel bound to," said Jeff. "I'd do it in a minute!" And he dodged a blow which his wife aimed at him with her fan.

"This strong air and the soothing motion make me feel sleepy," Mr. Seaton announced. "I think, Matilda, I'll go below and take a little nap."

"I'll finish this novel. It's been getting very interesting," said the lady, taking from her lap a copy of "The Three Musketeers," provided against the ennui of the voyage from the Kingston Circulating Library. "You ought to read it, Matthew."

"I'm in the midst of a rather interesting one that I picked up four or five days ago,"

Matthew replied. "I'm just at the point where the man proposes to the girl;" and he also departed via the companionway.

Matthew found Mayda in the cabin, kneeling on the cushioned seat at the side, looking out at the sea through the port-hole, the breeze blowing her hair past the curve of her perfect cheek.

"Everybody seems to be busy except you and me," he said, approaching her. "Isn't there anything we can talk about?"

"The weather is very fine after the storm," she said. "Who'd have thought that such innocent-looking little blue waves could have been so terrible?"

"If one wasn't drowned, it makes one glad to be alive, sunshine like this!" he rejoined. "Not long ago I was drifting about on this very spot, not expecting to be alive to-day."

"What does one think of at such a time?"

"For my part, I was thinking of the girl I love."

"Oh! You must be very much in love with her!"

"I don't believe any girl was ever loved so much!" said Matthew, with conviction; and he sat down on the bench beside her.

"Are you going back to her now, to tell her so?"

"I'm going to ask her if she'll promise to marry me."

"Oh! Then you're not engaged to her yet?"

"I met her for the first time only a week ago. It was a case of love at first sight—for me; but I lost track of her. Then unexpectedly, we met again; but I had learned—I had understood—that she was already betrothed. I had noticed that she wore a ring, and I was afraid it was an engagement ring. Later, she herself told me that it was."

Mayda was no longer looking out of the port-hole. She had dropped down beside him on the bench, and her eyes were wide with perplexity.

"But how can this be?" she asked. "A week ago! Then you mean—"

"Yes, you! Who else could it be?"

"But you were engaged to some one! Why, father told me, the day we got back, that you and he had drunk her health the night before, and how impatient you were for your wedding, and that he'd asked you to spend your honeymoon at Mona."

"Stop!" said Matthew. He was staring

at her wildly. "Let me think. Oh, this is inconceivable! Don't you see, when he and I spoke of her—the girl I loved—you!—that I didn't know you were his daughter? I was burning to get away to seek her out—to chase her around the world if need be, and I hated being delayed to meet his daughter—that is, you, whom I didn't know to be his daughter then. I was mad to get her away from that uncle of yours who I supposed must be the person she—you, that is—were to be married to against your will—her will, you know! And then she came, and it was you! But that ring—oh, by George!"

He beat his head with his fist. Mayda caught his wrist.

"Don't do that! About that ring—"

"I know! Your blessed mother told me the whole thing up on deck a minute ago. I noticed that you'd taken it off when I came aboard, and it made me hope. For a moment I hardly knew what I was doing."

"You were kissing Mrs. Morton," said Mayda, laughing a little hysterically.

"Was I? I wanted to kiss the whole world, but it was you all the same! Tell me," he said, catching her by both hands, "is that why you kissed the soldier?"

Mayda's eyes fell, and she became all a rose.

"You must have loved me then!" cried Matthew triumphantly.

"Oh, how dare you? I loved you in the dining-car, when you picked up my napkin! And when father told me that horrible story, I wanted to die! And then, when you began flirting with me in the garden—"

"Flirting! Oh, Heaven!"

"Of course I thought it must be flirting, because what else could it be with an engaged man? So I let you think that the ring was my own engagement ring, instead of Madge's; but afterward, when you seemed really to care—oh, how miserable I was!"

"Mayda!"

He took her slowly and irrevocably in his arms, and there were no more words. Immortality was born in the lovers in that embrace, and they saw each other with the eyes of spirits glorified.

The only event of importance on the trip to Kingston was the court martial held in the case of Ferguson, alias Boskom. There was no jury; every one present acted as judge. After he had been convicted, Mat-

thew remembered that he owed him a thousand dollars for capturing the chimpanzee, and was thereby constrained to confess his own theft of Mayda's head from the family photograph-album. This led to a discussion, ending in the decision that the convict should be permitted to choose his own sentence.

He promulgated it promptly. Penal servitude on the Isle of the Mysterious Presence, for life, or until he should disinter the treasure which, he averred, Nobleman Jack had concealed there. The hard labor which he was to perform meanwhile was to consist in going over the cay with pick and shovel, and in teaching the chimpanzee new tricks. The thousand dollars was to be invested in tools with which to do the digging, and in a supply of staple groceries. When the treasure should have been discovered, should it prove to consist of the Seaton jewels, he was faithfully to deliver the same to Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Madison, Jr., and was to receive in return a weekly stipend sufficient to support himself and the chimpanzee in decent comfort

for the rest of their natural lives, or during the continuance of good behavior.

It was so ordered by the court.

"And may God have mercy on your soul!" Judge Jefferson Morton added impressively.

As for the wedding, it was fixed for a month ahead, the whole party meanwhile visiting New York for shopping purposes, and to receive the congratulations of friends, including Madge Trelawney and Mr. Parker, who arranged to be married at the same time. The double ceremony was held at Mona, the ancestral residence of the Hon. Devereux Seaton and Matilda, his wife. Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson Morton were in attendance, and the governor of Jamaica and his lady graced the occasion by their presence.

The subsequent fate of the Smithsonian does not concern this narrative, but there is a nursery of rare little pink and white animals on an upper floor of the Madison mansion in New York. Its two head keepers are very happy, and are likely to remain so.

THE END

THE LOVELIEST FACE

THE loveliest face! I turned to her,
Shut in 'mid savage rocks and trees—
'Twas in the summer of the year,
And our two hearts were filled with ease—
And pointed where a wild rose grew,
Suddenly fair in that grim place.
"We should know all if we but knew
Whence came this flower, and whence this face!"

The loveliest face! My thoughts went round:
"Strange sister of this little rose,
So softly 'scaped from underground,
Oh, tell me if your beauty knows,
Being itself so fair a thing,
How came this lovely thing so fair?
How came it to such blossoming,
Leaning so strangely from the air?"

"The wonder of its being born,
So lone and lovely, even as you,
Half maiden moon, half maiden morn,
And delicately sad with dew!
How came it in this rocky place?
Or shall I ask the rose if she
Knows how the marvel of your face
On this harsh planet came to be?"

Richard Le Gallienne